WHAT SHALL BE, SHALL BE.

Sunfaqir Rojal - 1830

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

MRS. MEEKE,

AUTHOR OF THE

VEILED PROTECTRESS; OLD WIFE AND YOUNG HUSBAND; THERE IS A SECRET! FIND IT OUT; WHICH IS THE MAN? THE SPANISH CAMPAIGN, &c.

Who is it, that will doubt
The care of Heaven; or think immortal
Pow'rs are slow, 'cause they take the privilege
To choose their own time, when they will send their
Blessings down? DAVENANT.

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WHAT SHALL BE, SHALL BE.

CHAPTER I.

NEAR an hour having elapsed since the secretary's departure, the earl joined the merchant in the library, declaring, he could not conceive what detained him, requesting Mr. Harland would be so obliging as to repeat all he had heard or learnt respecting this William Mansel, since he was, upon reflection, become almost as eager as he must feel for Griffiths's explanation.

The merchant did as he required, dwelling very forcibly upon the youth's talents

and disposition, referring the earl to Mr. Arlington to corroborate all he had advanced, not choosing to mention his friend Rivers, or the curate, for obvious reasons.

His lordship agreed that he should have fallen into Mr. Harland's error, since it appeared his late brother's widow was supposed to be related to this youth—indeed her being implicated in the business was to him astonishing; however she should explain what connexion subsisted between her and this boy, whom, it was supposed, was still under her protection, it might hurt her feelings to be obliged to acknowledge her motives for secrecy; but the suspicions which Mr. Harland entertained made it absolutely necessary she should declare the truth.

Our merchant was so much gratified by these declarations, that he began to hope the earl had arranged some plan with his accomplices, which might enable him, by throwing all the blame upon their shoulders, to acknowledge that William Mansel

sel was his son; if he had hoped that this would not lead to his restoration to his proper rank in life, owing to his having left Broomfields, he would find himself wofully mistaken. Indeed our merchant rather enjoyed the idea of having overreached this plotting statesman, and was anticipating the triumph he had in store, when Mr. Gell entered the library, and closed the door after him before he advanced to the earl, who impatiently inquired—"Where is Griffiths?—is he too ill to leave home?"

"He was not at the office, my lord, nor had he been there since your lordship had inquired for the papers, which he ought to have had ready for your inspection. Mr. Beardmore advised my proceeding to his house, where I should learn the reason of his non-attendance, which he meant to report as this very morning. I did as he desired, but found the house shut up, every window being closed. I knocked repeatedly, but could not gain admittance;

 I therefore

I therefore made inquiries in the neighbourhood. Those to whom I applied related each a different story, though they all agreed that the family had secretly taken their departure, either four or five nights ago. The furniture, they assert, has been removed by little and little during the last fortnight, since different articles have been carried out, either late at night or early of a morning—nay, Mr. Griffiths himself, they report, seldom left home empty-handed; and for the last three weeks he has paid ready money to all his tradespeople, therefore he did not run away in debt; in that every one agree. The last time he was seen, was early in the morning of Saturday last, when a lady in mourning stopped at his door in a hack, but did not alight; some things were put into the coach, and his opposite neighbours saw him pull the door after him, and no one has been observed to go in or out of the house since."

"I never was more surprised!" replied the

the earl, whose countenance corresponded with his words. "You have acted very properly, Mr. Gell; but I must institute further and more minute inquiries." The secretary understood his lord's meaning, as he immediately retired. "Saturday," repeated the earl, talking to himself, and again referring to the note he had read to Mr. Harland—"yes, this was written on Friday. Upon my honour the mystery thickens, since why a man, so situated, should, as it appears, have absconded, I really cannot fathom. Can he have left England? or rather, what crime can he have committed to have rendered the rash step he has taken necessary? He cannot have committed forgery, at least to any amount, I should presume."

"I dare say not, my lord; but he may have apprehended that I meant to set some inquiries respecting William Mansel on foot, which he was not prepared to answer, so has withdrawn himself for a time with his accomplice Mrs. Harland, who was

 doubtless

doubtless the female who called for him in the coach."

"Your conjecture is certainly probable, sir, though I supposed her in Wales."

"She certainly may have returned thither, but not to Eskdale, my lord, which she left on the very evening her husband was buried—nay, I believe she was upon the road to London before the body was committed to the grave."

"Then she shewed herself to be wholly devoid of feeling. I really begin to fear your late brother was shamefully neglected. Hitherto I have been completely her dupe."

"Very possibly, my lord, as dame Gwynne reported that you had summoned her dear lady to town, when she set off in a cart, to join the Gloucester stage—nay, the old woman further boasted that you had planned the evening funeral, to enable her to depart unobserved; as she had been deep in all her lady's secrets, her reports were generally believed."

"Then

"Then I must openly contradict the old wretch's assertion; she shall feel I am not to be scandalized with impunity. The higher my character stands, the more it behoves me to crush such absurd tales in their birth."

"She has also left Eskdale, in consequence of her lady having, through the means of her noble relative, procured her an almshouse, in the environs of London, for a reward for her past and future services; and yet this very woman is even more than suspected of having caused her husband's death, and certainly did all in her power to accelerate my late brother's dissolution, by denying him, in conjunction with his wife, even common necessaries."

"I never heard of such a wretch! but after the falsities she has asserted respecting myself, I can believe her to be the monster of depravity you represent; however, neither she nor her worthless lady, for such I now consider Mrs. Harland,

 shall

shall escape with impunity. You doubtless frightened the precious pair, by the very proper measures you pursued, into leaving Wales; and if Griffiths, as it certainly appears, was in their secrets, dread of my anger has led to his departure; but they shall not escape me so easily. I make no doubt of tracing their route; and only let me discover their retreat, they shall soon be obliged to account for their strange conduct. I dare say William Mansel has been made the partner of their flight."

The earl fixed his piercing eyes upon the merchant while making this remark; Mr. Harland stood the scrutiny nearly as well as his lordship could have done, instantly agreeing, that as he had been also secretly removed, it was a very probable conjecture; it was therefore the more necessary to discover the plotting mover of this apparent complicated machinery, since such a woman might render this youth as profitable to her own welfare, as he had

evidently

evidently formerly been to farmer Griffiths, and either bring him forward as the real Marcus Mirvan, at some future opportunity, which he (Mr. Harland) felt assured he was, or suffer him to remain William Mansel, as might best suit her own interest.

Great as was the earl's command over his countenance, he was certainly alarmed by these suggestions, agreeing that though he could not so easily believe his lost son was this talented youth, still this vile woman might give him a great deal of trouble. "But surely," he continued, "even you, Mr. Harland, would hardly credit her assertions. I agree the mystery hanging over my son's fate may expose me to many inconveniences, but as to any puppet it may suit Jane Harland to produce, I shall never again be her dupe. She may have children of her own—nay, by this Griffiths, and she may hope to persuade you (she never will me) into a belief that one of them is your nephew, or, it is quite as

likely,

likely, that your return and researches may have deranged all their plans; I never was more at a loss. Pray do you know how old this William Mansel is supposed to be?"

"His age, my lord, tallies exactly with my lost nephew's; in short, as plain dealing is always the most candid, till I am fully acquainted with the birth and parentage of this William Mansel, I shall consider him as the boy who was so strangely removed from Mortlake, by the connivance and assistance of Mrs. Harland, whose child, I would venture to affirm upon oath, he is not. My late brother had seen, learnt, and suspected, more than your lordship can suppose. I entertain the same suspicions; like him, I feel assured that Mrs. Harland has been the tool of a more powerful agent, since she could have held out neither bribes or promises to either of the Griffithses, and a certain sum was paid for this boy's board; nor could the clerk have been so bountiful towards his brother,

ther, if he had not had some powerful friends. They have now found it to their interest to abscond, since doubtless they will be supported in their exile; and if they have made William Mansel a party in their flight, their principal will be wholly at their mercy, and must accede to all their terms, however unreasonable."

Never had the earl been more enraged; so home a charge was gall and wormwood to his proud spirit; yet, to set this odious, meddling merchant at defiance, might prove very dangerous. Had he been poor, he could easily have managed him, but he was supposed to be immensely rich; therefore, making a serious and successful effort, he replied—"I certainly understand your avowed suspicions, Mr. Harland; from any other man I should not have borne such language; but I consider you as a fellow-sufferer, while we continue in ignorance of my son's fate; and wo be to these treacherous, weak plotters, if they have any hopes of imposing this Mansel

 upon

upon me for my heir. I am very sorry I ever noticed my artful cousin, or ever suffered her to obtain a footing in my family, for truly it may be said, *who can touch pitch, and not be defiled?*"

"I have no doubt your lordship speaks feelingly; but for that artful, deceitful woman, whose dupe I never was, I might still have been blessed with a most amiable sister, since the disgrace she underwent certainly shortened her days. I do not mean to defend Emily's conduct as a wife and a mother, but I will ever maintain that she was led into temptation, and finally into error, by that serpent, whom she had so long cherished in her bosom, and who, as might be expected, first betrayed her confidence, and then sealed her treachery by appearing as evidence against her earliest friend."

"She had a painful task to fulfil, Mr. Harland; she must have connived at my dishonour, or have exposed her friend. But we had better suffer *byganes* to be

by-

byganes; meanwhile, I give you my word that I will pursue every likely measure to discover whether Mrs. Harland and Griffiths are together, and where they are gone, as I am even more anxious than you to discover whether this boy, about whom so much has been said, has accompanied them in their flight. Favour me with your address; and should you learn any thing respecting the fugitive or fugitives, as it is not yet ascertained they are together, you will generally find me at home at the hour you called this morning."

"I shall avail myself of your lordship's invitation; but as you are much more likely to discover whither Griffiths is gone, and who were the companions of his journey, I shall take no further steps till I see or hear from you; it may then be proper to consult, whether we had not better endeavour, by means of advertisements, to discover the retreat of William Mansel."

The

The earl started at this proposal, replying in a hurried anxious tone—"That can answer no good end, at least till we have ascertained whether he is with this precious pair," wishing the merchant good morning; who departed, certain he had greatly annoyed the great man, who, he made no doubt, had removed his subaltern agents out of his and every other person's knowledge, hoping that the hint he had thrown out respecting William Mansel would serve at once to mislead the earl, and to render him very suspicious of his confidents, who might, when least expected, establish his nephew's claims.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

NEVER had the earl felt himself less disposed for business than after the merchant's departure: he had fancied himself guarded at every point, yet this plodding calculator seemed to have penetrated into most of his secrets, and to be even better informed than he chose to acknowledge. As to Mrs. Harland, she had acted most imprudently and most absurdly throughout the whole business, and had evidently been much too open to mother Gwynne, who had boasted of all she knew. The having suffered William Mansel to make his escape had brought down all his wrath upon her, when she was forced to acknowledge that he left Broomfields, which, till he had seen Mr. Harland, he had supposed had very recently occurred, and now it appeared between

between five and six months had elapsed since his departure; she had evidently grossly deceived him in that instance, and if she had secreted the youth for some sinister purpose, or taken him with her abroad, she should severely feel his vengeance. Her plans had been all badly laid; from the first there had been too many people in her secrets, and she seemed only anxious to increase the number; here she had saddled him with dame Gwynne, and David Jenkins had also started up another thorn in his foot. Mrs. Harland had assured him the boy was gone for a soldier or a sailor, when, had she spoken the truth, she would have acknowledged no one knew what was become of him.

Colonel Murray had not landed in England when he left Broomfields, and Mr. Harland was but very lately come over, and merely to see his brother, therefore he must perforce acquit them of being concerned in the business; indeed the latter was solely indebted to Mrs. Harland's

abominable

abominable folly for the knowledge he had gleaned from her weak husband, who had taken advantage of her continual absences to write and to hear from his brother, the very thing she ought particularly to have guarded against. Had he trusted wholly to Griffiths, he should have been much more secure; and now he should be obliged to maintain a host of subalterns, who had been removed at a very great expence, or run the hazard of having his character blasted, and of seeing the present lord Exmore dispossessed of his title. And after all, William Mansel, had he received the same education, would have done him much the most honour; the sum he inherited from his grandfather's bounty would have sufficed for all his expences till he could have placed him in his office; and as he certainly would have been his uncle's heir, he would have supported his rank in life with due eclat. He had certainly suffered hatred of his mother, and a wish to disappoint her family, to carry him

him too great lengths; but then, query—would the present countess have accepted his hand, had she supposed his son was living? probably not. But had the match greatly increased his happiness? it had certainly gratified his ambition, and had considerably increased his fortune. But his lady wife was a mere woman of fashion, who could do the honours of her house to a crowded party, but who could not, had she ever made the attempt, have contributed either to her lord's happiness or amusement; they therefore seldom met in private, and never with pleasure; yet, though he thoroughly despised, and had long ceased to love her, the earl was particularly anxious to prevent this *fashionable automaton*, as he styled her, from imbibing Mr. Harland's suspicions; therefore, though he had been for the last month or five weeks suffering the full penalty of his unfeeling treatment of his son, to the countess and the world he appeared the same as usual. As they seldom occupied the

the same apartment, his nights had of late been solely devoted to forming plans for the disposal of his subaltern accomplices: the expence alone was very galling to his innate avarice, and he dared not appropriate the youthful Marcus's small fortune to the use of those who had assisted in depriving him of his birthright; and though he hoped, before he saw Mr. Harland, that he was prepared to repel any attack upon his character, he now dreaded the wily cousin Jane had purposely removed the youth she had placed at Broomfields; he must have her narrowly watched, which would be incurring more expence; Griffiths could not have been in her confidence, therefore he must appoint him his agent—bitterly repenting he had ever had recourse to this *serpent*, as the merchant truly called her, since she had wound her toils round him, till he found it impossible to cast her off, without placing himself at her mercy. Should the merchant, as he threatened, advertise his nephew, that

that wretched woman might blast all his schemes, and, what was still more to be dreaded, completely unmask him to the world. And to benefit whom had he banished his first-born? since he was by no means blind to the deficiences of the usurper of his rights, who had made some progress certainly at Eton, but who yet fell far short of his father's knowledge at the same age; in temper alone did he resemble the earl—like him he was a tyrant at this early age—but he could not, like him, conceal his ill humour, which rendered him more sulky than passionate; and at times he even baffled a man whose political and relative knowledge enabled him to assist in ruling Europe, who upon these occasions only wished he could hurl him from the rank he bore, as a proper punishment for his obstinacy. The countess continued to indulge him in every fancy, and thus rendered him much less amenable to her lord's control; but the young Adolphus was her idol, though he grew every day more

more disagreeable, and more presuming upon her indulgence. His father was as much as ever his dislike, and as far as he dared, he disputed his sovereign will; ill health rendered him a fixture at home, where even his brother considered him as such an annoyance that their quarrels were not among the least grievances the family were fated to endure; such must, and ever will be, the consequence of such a pernicious system of mistaken indulgence as the countess continued to pursue, though she often suffered very severely for her folly; but her mortifications were trifling to those this little *imp*, as his father styled him, inflicted upon his haughty self, since he frequently declared he would not obey his orders, and never did, except by main force; he was therefore banished the earl's apartments, who resolved to turn all his attention to the viscount, who, proud of being his comparative favourite, in his turn tyrannized over the general torment of the family during the vacations. The

twins

twins were much better tempered, and appeared to have inherited the Mirvan talents, as they excelled in music, dancing, &c. and bid fair to do honour to their family and connexions: still they did not add to the earl's happiness, as he seldom saw them except in their mother's presence, who had taught them to consider their highly-gifted father as such a domestic tyrant, that they never appeared to less advantage than in his presence, and were always happy when the formal, heartless daily interview was over.

The earl had for some years felt that he was not beloved by his family, and that his weak vain wife had represented him as an unfeeling father; this knowledge merely rendered him more abstracted in his domestic circle, where alone he displayed the terrible dark shades of his character, never appearing to give or receive joy; every eye, save his younger son's, sunk before his, and every voice was hushed into silence, while he considered even his blooming

ing daughters with haughty distrust, for lord Delmont could not be loved, since he was incapable of loving any being save himself.

Mr. Harland's visit, and the covert reproaches he had addressed to him, had stirred up all his angry passions; upon him he could neither wreak his vengeance, nor even pour forth his wrath: in his presence, he had felt the aching consciousness of a sullied mind; nay, even an indefinite remorse for his criminal manœuvres; and now, when left to commune with his own mind, he experienced a sort of secret foreboding, which effectually corroded the distinguished lot which fortune, aided by his wonderful genius, seemed to have prepared for him.

CHAP-

CHAPTER III.

CONVINCED that he had rather alarmed the earl, or at all events put him upon a wrong scent, Mr. Harland returned to his hotel, where having summoned Martin, in whom he placed the same confidence the colonel had long done, he briefly related what had passed between him and the earl, adding—"No doubt every one at all acquainted with William Mansel are to be either removed out of my reach or bribed to secrecy; therefore I shall be very much puzzled how to proceed against the great man, since the mere evidence of my nephew will prove of no avail. My late brother could not assist our cause, and as to farmer Griffiths, he has, unasked, and when he could have no motive to deceive, declared he did not know the parents of the

the youth; he might be able to reveal when Marcus was placed under his care, and by whom; but he has ere this received his instructions. I only hope the hint I threw out will induce the earl to accuse his cousin, who may in revenge turn evidence against him; I shall write what has occurred to the colonel, whose uncle will triumph in my discomfiture, and perhaps for some very wise reasons Providence may have ordained that my nephew shall continue Edward Melfort; if so, I should vainly attempt to revert those immutable decrees."

Martin agreed that every precaution appeared to have been taken to prevent any one from appearing against the earl; but while Mr. Harland wrote his letter, he would walk into Charles-street, since he felt assured that the secretary's inquiries had occasioned a little gossip in the neighbourhood, though Griffiths not having set off in debt was all in his favour; he only wondered whether he would ever be heard of

of again, rejoicing at the trouble, expence, and uneasiness, they had evidently occasioned the statesman, who must have bribed Griffiths in particular very high, to induce him to leave a certainty in so disgraceful a manner for a comparative uncertainty. Mr. Harland was also half consoled for his want of success, from having so perplexed the great man, sitting down to address the colonel, while Martin sallied forth, resolving to call first at the stationer's, where he could purchase a quire of paper, which would afford him an excuse to enter into conversation with the heavy headed boy, who would doubtless recollect him; nay, rather than fail, he would boldly inquire for Mrs. Harland, picturing to himself how agreeably she would be surprised, should she not have been the lady in black who called for Griffiths; but on his arrival at the shop, he saw a bill upon the first floor, announcing—"A first floor to let, furnished;" he therefore stepped boldly in, and found only the mas-

ter

ter behind the counter, exclaiming—"That bill upon your private door, sir, leads me to apprehend Mrs. Harland has left you; I was directed to her here, and had really something of consequence to impart to her."

"Then I am sorry to say, sir, I cannot direct you to her; I was in hopes, from your noticing the bill, you wished to have taken her apartment; be that as it may, I will never let them again to a lady so fond of law."

"Has she brought her suit at last to a conclusion?" replied the laughing Martin. "I know she often came out of Wales to consult with her lawyer. I travelled with her from Bristol about five weeks ago, when I saw her alight at your door; and as business called me this way again in the evening, I also saw her *lawyer*, who called upon her about nine, and as I chance to know him, I made no doubt of her gaining her cause."

"I can believe you, but she has only

 slept

slept at my house one night since that journey; she remained a week then; but the last time I saw her, she arrived the over night, and set off next morning very early, pack and baggage, telling me she was going into the North, where she expected to remain six months or more, therefore she could not afford to keep my lodgings on during her absence, paying me very honourably up to the quarter: but it is my belief she was no more going into the North than I was, as you shall hear: the coach that took her from hence was but just come upon the stand; the owner, and who is also coachman, is a near neighbour; in putting in the baggage he laid a hammer down in the passage which he had been using, and forgot to take it away with him; he called a few hours afterwards to inquire whether I had seen it, which induced me to ask him a few questions, which may enable you to trace her, without mentioning from whom you derived your information. My neighbour

drove

drove madam first to No. —, Charles-street, Westminster, where a gentleman, who seemed in waiting, got into the coach, not the *lawyer* you will remark. I knew him as well as you, and have been astonished at his want of taste; as to her, she knew on which side her bread was buttered—but to proceed with my story; the gentleman ordered the coach to the Bricklayers' Arms, where they alighted, took out their baggage, and paid him his fare; and as he met with another customer immediately, he could not tell me where they went from thence, but not of course into the North; and to tell you the truth, I am very glad she is gone; I should not have liked to have turned her out, but she has been no credit to my house, since it began to be whispered in the neighbourhood that her *lawyer* chose odd hours to visit her; I have always maintained she was a married woman, though I really believe she divided her favours."

"That may be," replied Martin, "but

you spoke no more than the truth ; she has very lately lost her husband, since I travelled in her company."

"That accounts for her being in deep mourning ; it might be as well to keep up appearances, though I dare say she is rejoicing in her heart, admitting she is no loser by his death, for I do not think the *lawyer* was over liberal ; she certainly spent a great deal of money in travelling, and so perhaps the *great man* has turned her over to somebody else."

Martin agreed it was very probable, taking leave of the stationer, resolving to make some inquiries in Charles-street before he proceeded to the Bricklayers' Arms, having very little hope of discovering whither she went from thence, since so many coaches called there hourly, that it would be next to impossible to ascertain the road she and her companion had taken. As he had foreseen, Mr. Gell's inquiries had rendered the neighbours more curious than ever to discover why Mr. Griffiths had

had departed so secretly, and whither he was gone. Having easily found the house, which continued shut up, he walked into a shoemaker's shop nearly opposite, where he perceived two women and a man in deep discourse—"Pray did not a Mr. Griffiths live in that house which is shut up?" he inquired.

"He did, sir; we were just talking about him. I hope he does not owe you any money, because you are not likely to get it in a hurry."

"No, he is not in my debt, but I came upon business, and was surprised to find the house shut up; I thought I had made a mistake, but I see I am right," looking at the direction he had himself written.

"No, sir," cried one of the females in a spiteful tone—"the house is there, but the birds have flown; I always said that no good ever came of such wicked connexions."

"Was not Mr Griffiths married?" inquired Martin, with well affected surprise.

 "Married

"Married indeed!" was the retort—"they might have jumped over the broomstick, for any thing I know to the contrary; I always said she was a bold hussy; I know she passed for his wife, more was the shame, but I was never their dupe; however, I believe he has turned this madam off, and taken up with another; but as my husband says, 'tis no business of ours, as he is not gone off in our debt; indeed we never worked for either him or any of his trollops; we want no such customers."

"Why such people often make a strange finish," rejoined Martin—"has Mr. Griffiths taken his tradespeople in to any amount, do you understand?"

"I wish, Mrs. Medley," said the husband, "you would not let your tongue run so fast; you have led this gentleman to suppose Griffiths has gone off in peoples debt, though I can assure you, sir, he has done no such thing; that he must have, somehow or other, fallen into difficulties,

culties, is very clear, since he had an excellent situation under government, which he has of course given up; no doubt he has well feathered his nest, or he would not have left Old England, except to save his neck indeed; and who can tell what he may have done? for as I say, sir, if I cannot, even with good looking after, keep the few men I employ honest, how can the king manage with the number in his pay? he is robbed, and so am I; but the rub is, that I am obliged to contribute my quota, when these government rogues run off in the country's debt, and there is no one to saddle my own losses upon; it is really a hard matter these times for an honest man to pay his way."

The females now joined in the debate, and abused all those in power, till the husband again interfered, maintaining that the best of men might be taken in, that the devil was never so black as he was described, with many more old saws, and equally wise sayings.

Martin let him go on, till a momentary pause enabled him to say—"If I understand right, Mr. Griffiths has left England?"

"We can be at no certainty of that, sir," replied the shoemaker; "my wife and her friend let their tongues run too fast; we have only circumstantial evidence for what they assert; and was I upon a jury——"

"Now don't bother us, Mr. Medley, with your law quibbles; if we have not positive proof they have left England, we must believe they have, else why did they take that road?"

"Why, pray, Mrs. Wiseacre, might not they be going to Ramsgate or Margate, as well as Dover? though I agree their giving us all the go-by, as one may say, rather favours your suspicion."

"I believe so, only you always like to put in your oar; now I will be judged by this gentleman, whether there is not every reason to suppose they are gone to France."

"Why

"Why not to Holland, when you are guessing?" cried the husband.

"Now do not provoke me, Mr. Medley, I was speaking to this gentleman: you must know, sir, that my eldest son, who is now in his thirteenth year, and as fine a boy of his inches as ever trod in shoe of leather, though I say it that should not say it, being his mother; well, sir, he is at boarding-school, at Welling, just below Shooter's Hill, and comes on surprisingly; so, sir, last Saturday he came home for a holiday, and having got a little cold, I did not choose to send him home on Monday."

"Now what has the boy's cold, and your wishing to indulge him, to do with the Griffithses?" obtruded the husband.

"Why you will not give a body time to explain; Welling you must know, sir, is in the direct Dover-road, and many stages change horses there; so while my son and some of his schoolfellows were looking out for the Dartford coach, in which they were coming to town, the Union

Dover coach drove up to the inn, where they were in waiting, and who should pop his head out of the window but this very Mr. Griffiths, whom he knows almost as well as his own father; but as he had never dealt with us he did not pull off his hat; so he read what was written upon the coach, which was Dover Union; and while he was doing so, two women alighted, the one, a well-dressed lady in black; the other, a mean-looking old woman, who reminded the boy of a witch, as she had a man's hat on, and a great-coat, and he supposes they were friends of our late neighbours, as he spoke very sharp to them because they kept the coach waiting a few seconds; now ten to one whether I should ever have heard of the circumstance, if a very good-looking gentleman, as you may be, sir, had not called this morning to make inquiries, as you have done, about our neighbour; so of course Mr. Medley and I were talking about him at dinner; when Bob ups and tells us what I have been

been relating; and as he always told me truth, I dare say he saw Mr. Griffiths at Welling—but here he comes, so you may question him yourself."

"Yes," cried the father, "he has got his mother's tongue, which never lies still."

While he was speaking, a bold-looking boy came in, who stared Martin full in the face; but as he was no customer, at least to his knowledge, he did not even touch his hat, till his mother exclaimed—"Where is your manners, Bob? Tell this gentleman where you last saw our opposite neighbour, who has, as we suppose, run away."

"Why, I have told you all I know already," cried the polite youth, throwing his hat upon the counter.

"Mrs. Medley, has told me, master Robert, where you saw Mr. Griffiths," said Martin; "perhaps you will be so obliging as to describe the ladies who alighted at Welling."

The schoolboy, delighted at being thus politely

politely addressed, made his best bow, saying—"The lady in mourning, sir, was rather stout, and like my mother, neither short nor tall. She had dark eyes; but looked as if her temper had been ruffled, and was not very handsome. I should suppose she was near forty. The old woman had a very forbidding countenance, and her queer dress made her look just like an old witch. She was sixty at least, and much taller than the other, who seemed the mistress. Whether they were friends of Mr. Griffiths, I can't say. He spoke in an angry tone to them, blaming them for delaying the coach."

Martin thanked master Robert for his information, adding—"I think I know both the females. The *witch*, I take to be an old Welchwoman, at the beck and call of the other; and I make no doubt of their being Mr. Griffiths's travelling companions."

"Indeed!" cried Mrs. Medley; "nay I remember we heard a lady in black called

ed for him. Ay, there is more in the wind than we are aware of. Do not you think they are gone abroad, sir?"

"I think it very probable; and when I know rather more about them, I will call and let you know, in return for your communications," wishing them good morning, having thus far succeeded in ascertaining that Griffiths, Mrs. Harland, and dame Gwynne, had certainly left town, and had taken, as the stationer suspected, the Kent-road.

Mr. Harland had been impatiently waiting his return, and agreed that it appeared very clear, the trio were gone, or going, abroad, acknowledging that he wished he could trace their route, since, though they had probably sheltered themselves from being required to appear as evidences for or against the earl, he should like to be able to inform his lordship where he might find them, if it was only to convince him that he had never been his dupe, as he should insist upon his applying to them

them for the required explanation respecting William Mansel—nay, he might offer to send Martin with his lordship's messenger.

Martin hoped he should be able to make some further discoveries, as he had a scheme in view; but as it was Mr. Harland's dinner-hour, he resolved to take his own meal before he again sallied forth to make further inquiries.

CHAPTER IV.

BETWEEN seven and eight, Martin left the hotel, and proceeded to Charing-cross, where he learnt, for a shilling bribe, where the Dover Union coach went from, and all the houses of call in London. He went first to the principal office, and inquired whether three people, answering the description he gave, had not left London in

their

their coach the Saturday before, offering to pay the man for the trouble he should give him.

The bookkeeper instantly turned to the day, saying—"I rather thought there was some mystery attached to the people you inquire after, who exactly answered your description; so if you will tell me what makes you so curious, I will be perfectly candid in return."

Martin, who was never at a loss, quickly replied—"Suppose the gentleman should have persuaded the lady in black to visit France in his company, unknown to her friends and family; I dare not be more explicit, as your passengers may not be the people I mean."

"I really think they were, and I cannot say much for the gentleman's choice; but perhaps he chose her like old silver—for her weight of metal. But to answer your first question: a gentleman, exactly answering your description, took an inside place on Friday morning, in the name of Graves;

Graves; he was booked only to Canterbury, and was to be taken up at the Bricklayers' Arms. He had not left the office many minutes, when the *black lady* came, and took a place by the name of Hudson, inquiring whether the coach was full. I told her she was the second passenger, so there were still two vacant places. She thanked me, and went her way, and could not have proceeded many yards, ere an old Welchwoman, in a beaver hat, and an awkward brown great-coat, or wrapper, came and asked for an inside place in the Dover Union coach, referring to a card she held in her hand. I know she was Welch, because I was born in the principality, so I spoke to her in Welch, and she was delighted; she was, like the black lady, only going to Canterbury, and she gave me the name of Morgan. Somehow I half suspected this curious trio were all of the same party, and she placed it beyond a doubt by giving me a note, which I had given to Mrs. Hudson in change

not

not ten minutes before. Now I could not conceive why they had come one by one, as the first could have secured the three places; it was therefore very natural I should think they had some reasons for all these precautions; and now it appears there was an elopement in the wind. As to the Welchwoman, she would have appeared more in character outside, however it might be necessary to humour her. Now are these the people you mean?"

"I think they are; and believe me, but for their connexions, I would be as explicit as you could wish. I would give a pound to know whether they are still at Canterbury."

"Not they, if they were afraid of a pursuit; but for the bribe you offer, I will endeavour to discover which road they went, as they may have proceeded to Margate, Ramsgate, Sandwich, Deal, or Dover; from thence coaches are always ready to convey them to any of those places."

"Certainly; but if I call in a day or two,

two, with the fellow to this in my hand," presenting the man with a sovereign, "perhaps you may be able to give me some intelligence."

The bookkeeper would write that very evening to the clerk at Canterbury, who would give him every information in his power; and thus they parted.

Mr. Harland, when he gave in his report, much doubted their gaining any intelligence of their real route; they were no doubt ordered to take every means to avoid any pursuit, and were particularly cautioned not to suffer any one hereafter to trace their route; they were of course provided with every necessary passport to embark at any port, and to proceed into Flanders, Holland, or even Germany, if most likely to prevent their being noticed.

Martin agreed that they might not even cross the water, since it was equally possible they might strike into another road, and proceed either north or south, according

ing to their instructions. Should he set off that night for Canterbury? he inquired.

Mr. Harland thought he had better wait the result of the bookkeeper's inquiries; he would finish his letter to the colonel, and write again, should they learn any thing worth communicating. He did so; and when he retired for the night, he consulted with Martin whether he should let the earl know the discoveries he had made.

The valet thought they had better wait to hear from Canterbury; since they knew so little, it would merely be putting the great man upon his guard; he must tell Mr. Harland some tale to account for Griffiths's absence; it might be as wise to see if he would relate facts.

The merchant agreed to this reasoning; and on the second day, at the time appointed, Martin again called at the coach-office, when the bookkeeper, anxious to finger the promised sovereign, read him the following extract from the answer he had

had received to his letter.—"I have a perfect recollection of the three people you mention, who came down on the fifteenth, which may possibly be owing to the great precautions they took to avoid being either traced or followed; too much care is as bad as too little. They neither of them even entered the office. I assisted them to alight. The gentleman had a good-sized portmanteau with him in the coach, which he took under his arm when upon the pavement. I asked if he was going forwards? to which I received a simple 'no.' The porter offered to carry his baggage, but he received the same answer; and without even looking round him, he crossed the street into Butchery-lane. The lady in black had a banbox in her hand, and she equally refused any assistance—'she was not going far.' She also crossed the way, but did not follow the gentleman, as she proceeded up St. George's. The old Welchwoman was armed with two large bundles; she was also very near her friends,

she

she said, and she followed in the wake of the black lady, of whom she was evidently afraid of losing sight. Turning to the coachman, I said—'Why you seem to have had a rum set, Joseph.'—'I believe so. They affect to be strangers to each other, but they did not deceive me, nor the gentleman I left at Boughton. He said they were strange people, and had much ado to keep the old Welchwoman silent; however, as they did the handsome thing by me, why I neither know nor care at what game they are playing; but it does not strike me that they are Canterbury people—do you think they are?'—'No truly, as I never remember to have seen any of their faces before; the old woman may have been here hop-picking; however, they are none of them great things.' Thus, though we all thought them suspicious characters, no one thought of watching them; and from that time till I received your letter, I had never given them a thought; I have since made many and various inquiries,

but

but no one could afford me the least intelligence; and I need not tell you how many different roads they may have taken from hence; and if they wished to cross the water, a hundred smugglers would be ready to assist them if they had but the *ready*. A Ramsgate coachman, who thinks he took up the gentleman on the road, though he was differently dressed to what I described, tells me an Ostend passage-boat left their harbour that evening; but as what he says is mere conjecture, I do not wish to lead either you, or those whom it may concern, into an error. A police-officer would soon have been upon the right scent, but I suppose it would not have been proper to have set one at their heels."

The man ceased reading, observing—"A queer set indeed!"

"They are a very worthless set," rejoined Martin; "and notwithstanding their great caution, I think they will meet with their deserts before they die. I shall take

take no more trouble about them, as I was chiefly actuated by curiosity," giving the bookkeeper the promised sovereign, and taking his leave.

Mr. Harland agreed that they seemed to have baffled all pursuit; and as to his informing the earl of his having traced them even to Ramsgate, it could answer no good purpose. At present they fancied themselves secure; and perhaps it might in the end prove a fortunate circumstance that these difficulties had arisen to prevent his attacking the earl, since he dreaded what might in that case have been the fate of his nephew; sitting down to write the recent discoveries to the colonel, to whom he acknowledged, that he believed he should be guided by sir Charles Freeman's advice, and finally leave the earl to the goadings of his own conscience, which, when once awakened, was likely to prove a very sufficient punishment even for his base conduct towards his son.

CHAPTER V.

THREE days having elapsed without his receiving any letter or message from the earl, Mr. Harland had determined to leave London the following morning, after sending his direction to the great man, when he received a note from the minister, requesting the favour of his company to breakfast the next morning, when he hoped to be able to explain to him what had induced Mr. Griffiths to abscond, who had, for very good reasons, made the widow Harland the partner of his flight.

"Well, this is more surprising than their being missing," cried Martin, when Mr. Harland, after having returned a polite answer, put his lordship's note into his hands. "To what cause can he attribute their hasty and very secret depar-

ture?

ture? Machiavel as he is, I cannot conceive to what subterfuge he will have recourse. However, if I might take such a liberty, sir, I would advise you not to be drawn in by any promises he may make to disclose the residence of your nephew, since, like sir Charles, I feel assured that such a father would render his existence a burthen."

"As he must hate the youth, I feel like you, Martin, convinced that he had better for ever remain in ignorance of his rank and expectations, than to be forced upon a man, who has, we may say already, planned his death, since he certainly hoped the climate of the West Indies would effectually prevent his ever claiming his rights; yet I wish his lordship to continue in the same uneasy state of suspense he must now be enduring, and it is not among the least of his punishments, the having to provide for such a host of agents. What can more forcibly speak his dread of an exposure, than his having

even removed that worthless old Welch-woman, who could not have been produced in evidence, as she was merely in her viler mistress's confidence respecting her wish to get rid of her husband?"

Various and contradictory therefore were the conjectures the merchant and the valet formed, till at the appointed hour Mr. Harland was again ushered into the superb library, where a breakfast table groaned beneath every luxury likely to flatter the appetite.

The earl, whose countenance proclaimed that he was a welcome guest, received him with the most insinuating courtesy.—"Before we begin our meal, my dear sir, let me explain, what at first appeared to me so extraordinary, that I could not any otherwise account for Griffiths's strange departure, than by supposing he had committed forgery; and, sorry am I to say, I was correct in my suspicions. My precious cousin, the widow Harland, has drawn bills upon me at various dates,

to

to which my acceptance has been forged, no doubt by Griffiths. My bankers have already paid between five and six thousand pounds; however, the next that is presented, they are to stop the bearer, though, connected as I am with the wicked woman, I cannot prosecute—nay, were I to do so, you, from being also related to her, would share in the disgrace. But this must convince you that I never was in the wretched being's confidence; nor, of course, was she ever in mine, else she need not have had recourse to such desperate means to raise money. Griffiths is also a defaulter towards government, therefore they have provided for the future."

"So it should appear, my lord," replied the really astonished merchant, wondering whether either Griffiths, or his more wicked accomplice, were aware of the charges now brought against them, which must effectually prevent their returning to England. Could they be guilty? or did it merely suit my lord's purpose to represent

 them

them so? At all events their characters were completely blasted, and they had probably fallen into the snares of a man, whose talents enabled him to crush all his inferior agents.—"Does not your lordship mean to have them pursued?" inquired the bewildered merchant; "were I not so nearly connected with the principal in this iniquitous business, I should, ere this, have traced their route, and have requested they might have been given up, wherever they had sought a refuge; but, as matters are, I had much rather pay the money. They cannot commit any farther depredations, and I ought to pay the penalty of my folly, in ever having noticed Mrs. Harland, after her behaviour previous to, and after the divorce. I now believe her to have been more actuated by malice, than by any other motive. Curiosity induced me to have the telegraph worked during a couple of hours yesterday, as I wished to know what ships had sailed from, or past Portsmouth, at the time of their departure.

ture. Many passengers have lately sailed for America, but they were chiefly foreigners, though it may be supposed they have assumed other names."

Mr. Harland, who had come to the resolution of appearing to be his lordship's dupe, as every succeeding moment rendered him more averse to bringing forward his nephew's claims, since he began to fancy, that to this great man, remorse, conscience, vice, or virtue, were but ideal feelings, and that he would sacrifice his nearest relative to preserve his reputation; he therefore appeared to adopt the earl's sentiments, who, during breakfast, displayed his brilliant talents for conversation, while his countenance evinced the solidity of his mind. Such was the captivation of his manners, that had not his letter to Mr. Harland, and other previous circumstances, steeled his heart against him, he should have been the dupe of eloquence, which being calculated to hush every angry

gry passion, or to rouse every better feeling to energy, enabled the minister to charm and to delude the multitude.

Mr. Harland made Martin participate in his surprise by his communications, who agreed that Griffiths and his female friend seemed likely to pay pretty dear for having seconded the earl's schemes, who had very probably devised, if not executed these supposed forgeries, to keep them in check, since he must have provided too amply for their wants to render it necessary for Mrs. Harland to have recourse to such a measure.—"I wonder whether the farmer has had any part assigned him," said Mr. Harland; "he cannot have been removed so easily as his brother. David is doubtless gone; perhaps the farmer is to propagate William Mansel's death."

"Suppose I proceed to Westbury before I return into Hampshire," said Martin, "without going near Griffiths; I must

must pick up some intelligence, and rather than fail, I would call to ask what had become of his brother."

"A very good notion, though I am now merely curious to learn what lengths his lordship's fears will carry him."

The valet therefore started that evening in the mail for Bristol, and the next day Mr. Harland returned to Smallbury Priory.

Nothing occurred during Martin's journey of any moment; but having, by way of stretching his legs, chosen to walk to Westbury, he overtook Miss Curtis in Park-street, who declared herself very happy to see him, inquiring what stay he proposed making in the neighbourhood? "Not a very long one, as he was merely come in search of some books, which had been left by mistake at farmer Abinger's," readily accepting her invitation to dinner, which would be quite ready by the time they reached Clifton.

The Arlington family soon became their subject, and Miss Curtis was happy to inform

form her friend, that Miss Ellen appeared to have quite recovered her spirits, reverting once more to her having reclaimed her picture of William Mansel, repeating her reasons for so doing, as she was sure he had never done any thing to render him desperate, only wishing her father had not been so prejudiced against him; but he never liked people except they were great and rich; and her sister never saw any merits but in rich or titled men; so she thought it most probable her sister would marry for money, and she for love.

Thus did Miss Curtis recapitulate the artless effusions of a very innocent mind; and during dinner, she declared that she had once feared the dear child would have fretted herself to death; she was therefore most happy—she at least supposed her former favourite was living, though she still seemed deeply to feel having been obliged to write him the cruel letter of her father's dictating; and from that time her regard for her father had savoured more

more of duty than of affection, though of late she had become his prime favourite, she was so much more obliging than her sister; and as he felt his infirmities increase, so he clung to those most likely to sympathize with his feelings, and Ellen was ever ready to play, sing, or read to him, since she pitied him for his mistaken notions.

Martin made many suitable replies, but under the plea of haste, made his retreat before tea, not feeling inclined to become more intimate with this pretty young woman, having no intention to make her an offer of his hand; he therefore rather wished to drop the acquaintance.

CHAPTER VI.

MARTIN reached Westbury just as farmer Abinger and his wife were sitting down to tea; they were rejoiced to see him, and very happy to hear the colonel continued to mend. He had framed a very likely excuse to pass current for his visit, and then inquired the news of the neighbourhood, telling them that he had very lately been in London, amusing them with a few droll anecdotes, by way of drawing them on, and mentioning his having dined with Miss Curtis in his way thither.

"I cannot say I know the lady," resumed the farmer, "but I wish she may induce you to fix in our neighbourhood, since, take it in general, we are pretty good sort of people, the Griffithses excepted.

ed. You have not heard of their fine goings on I suppose?”

“I have heard nothing respecting those of Broomfields; but I can tell you that a clerk of that name, who held a high situation in the foreign department, has very lately absconded, and as I think he was the farmer's brother, your neighbour may have participated in his disgrace; so pray what has occurred?”

“Why they have all taken themselves off, perhaps to join the gentleman brother; and there has been old Rose and burn the bellows at the farm; but drink your tea, and then I will tell you all about them, for I see I have raised your curiosity.”

“Indeed you have,” hastily swallowing his last cup of tea.

“You are in such haste to tell your story, Mr. Abinger, Mr. Martin has had no pleasure in his tea; I like to take my time, else it does me no good.”

“Well, well, dame, then now enjoy yourself, while I tell Mr. Martin what has happened.

happened. I think it was during the last evening you spent here, Mr. Martin, that David Jenkins came to ask my advice respecting an offer he had had of being bailiff to a gentleman?"

"I remember the circumstance, as I mixed in the conversation."

"You did, and gave him some very prudent advice; and I cannot say I supposed he would ever leave Broomfields; but report says he was in all Griffiths's secrets respecting that nice lad who ran away last spring; be that as it may, Griffiths or his brother, who certainly spent one night at Broomfields, have made him believe that he may take the moon in his teeth where he is gone, as he left Westbury the very day week you and the gentlemen went into Hampshire, as he boasted to my men, to be bailiff, or rather, master of an excellent farm; but where this said farm was situated he did not choose to tell, merely giving them to understand his fortune was made, and that it was well for him

him William Mansel had ever been placed under the farmer's care; though what that could have to do with his good fortune he knows best; I am sure no friends of the lad would think of rewarding either him or Griffiths for having made a slave of the poor boy: be that as it may, some man came late one evening to Broomfields, and David went with him next morning to Lamplighters' Hall, just below Shorehampton, where he went on board a vessel, bound, I understand, for America; so a fig for his great prospects, if they are to begin with what I call transportation. Well, David may rue having been so close, as he half hinted to one of my men he was going to Ireland; if he has been deceived into that belief, why he will be the dupe of those who have got him off; had he been wise, he would not have budged; but he fancied himself a match for any body, and now he will pay for his folly; whether his late master was also spirited away, or has really been guilty of some

some crimes which have placed him in jeopardy, I cannot resolve; the latter is the reason assigned for his disappearance, for off they all are, as you shall hear.

"It will be a fortnight to-morrow, since two men, one of whom had a very respectable appearance, the other was a sly leering hound, but very well dressed, and very civil, and one has no right to judge people from their looks, since a rogue has often the appearance of an honest man; yet I cannot help wondering why they called upon me, of all people, to direct them to Broomfields, since I was never intimate with Griffiths, never exchanged many words with him (except in the way of business), nor ever visited at his house. Well, the first-mentioned of this precious pair, without giving me time to inquire his business, told me he came from London, where he had been told I was the most likely person to direct him to farmer Griffiths's; now as any child in the village could have done the same, I was rather surprised

surprised by their visit, but I did not tell him so, merely offering to send one of my boys with them to Broomfields. He was much obliged; they wished to take the farmer unawares, as they were come upon a very unpleasant business, which could not long remain a secret; therefore they could not be more explicit at present. They certainly rendered me very curious; but as a still tongue denotes a wise head, I took no notice of what they had told me even to my wife; and sure enough, before evening, I heard that my neighbour had an execution in his house, and that every thing within and without doors had been seized for debt, and would be immediately sold, if matters could not be compromised. This account only increased my wonder, since no one was reputed to be a better paymaster than Griffiths; therefore various reports and conjectures were soon afloat in the village: their son having gone for a soldier, was now thought extraordinary—then William

Mansel's

Mansel's having been in a manner spirited away, was rehearsed—in short, there was no end of surmises respecting the why and the wherefore. I said nothing, though I had as many doubts and suspicions as other folks.

"Well, the next morning, that is, much about my dinner-hour, the gentleman-looking stranger called upon me again, when he told me he supposed I had heard what had befallen neighbour Griffiths, adding—'I will now candidly tell you, Mr. Abinger, why I addressed myself to you in the first instance: I had been assured that you were the most likely man to take Broomfields, which joins some of your distant land.'—I desired a further explanation, hoping Mr. Griffiths would yet be able to accommodate matters. I did not wish to make a neighbour's ruin a stepping-stone to fortune, much less to take the farm over his head.—'That must be at your option; but whether you close with my proposals or not, Griffiths must give

give up the farm—indeed, he is both ready and willing to vacate the premises, as all must be sold; and even then he may not escape a prison, as more will come out than you can be aware of yet.'—'Pray, sir, may I crave your name?' said I; 'as I always supposed this farm belonged to Mr. Griffiths's brother, who lives in London.'—'It certainly did belong to that gentleman, but I have very lately made the purchase; and as both furniture and stock were included, I am now master of the whole. James Griffiths was only in fact his brother's bailiff, and he took such latitude in consequence of the relationship, that at last he would hardly account for the corn he sold, much less any minor articles. Mr. Griffiths bore with him till he found he encouraged him to wrong him, when he consulted with me; I am a lawyer, and made the original purchase for him; I therefore advised his disposing of it at any loss, that some other person might force his brother to give up the possession,

session, offering him what he thought a very fair price; therefore I repeat, Broomfields as it stands is now mine. You may think Mr. James Griffiths has been hardly dealt with, but were you as well acquainted with his goings on as I have been, you would say he has been rightly served, as he would have ruined his brother, and yet not have made his own fortune. The eldest son, who is gone for a soldier, was very extravagant—sold corn and cattle, and then spent the money; in short, there was no other means of putting a stop to their career; and if I had not made the purchase, a thousand other people would have come forward.'—But not to tire you, Mr. Martin, as he ran on for another hour, concluding by again offering me the farm, as I had sons growing up, and I should not find him a hard landlord. That might be, I replied, but were I inclined to take the land over a neighbour's head, where was I to find money to purchase the crops, stock, and furniture? He offered

offered to make every thing as easy as possible if I would but become his tenant, giving me four-and-twenty hours to consider of his offer, as his presence was immediately required in London, giving me his card—here it is," presenting it to Martin, who read — "Mr. Chance, Solicitor, Grays Inn;" while the farmer continued— "He certainly spoke me very fair, but I was never fond of lawyers; but without telling him that, I objected to making any proposals while Griffiths remained in possession; he might prove a better tenant than he had done a bailiff—it would be but fair to give him the preference—and thus we parted.

"Next morning he sent me a note, requesting to see me at Broomfields immediately. This I thought was all fair and above-board, as I should now have Mr. Chance and Griffiths face to face, and might be guided by circumstances, when to my increasing surprise, upon my arrival there, one of the farming men who opened

opened the gate for me, told me that his master and mistress and young hopeful had gone off during the night, while every body in the house was in a sound sleep, and they had not gone empty handed. Before I could ask any questions, Mr. Chance came out to meet me, excusing himself for not having called upon me, declaring he was afraid to leave the premises, as he had already been a considerable loser from his want of caution; this was the consequence of placing confidence in others; adding—'Griffiths is actually gone off, though I had no wish to detain him; and his brother was inclined to shew him every lenity, though he is very deep in his debt; but it was agreed only last night that they should leave the house within the week, and I had promised they should remove all their wearing apparel and a few trifles they called their own—when lo and behold, when I rose this morning, between eight and nine, expecting to find Mrs. Griffiths ready to make breakfast,

breakfast, I was told she was not stirring, nor had my stupid fellow, whom I had put in charge, seen any of the family, though they had hitherto been very early risers. I walked into the farm-yard, when I soon missed a remarkable fine horse, whom you have doubtless often seen, and who was fit for any thing and every thing, and for which he had been offered sixty guineas more than once; of course I inquired where he was gone—no one could inform me; my heart misgave me, and upon looking farther I missed the light market cart—a most complete thing of its kind; no one could account for its being gone; I however traced the wheels to the back of the house, and there it was very evident the horse had been backed into the shafts and as the window of the room this precious pair slept in is almost parallel with the ground, no doubt could be entertained of their having given me leg-bail: to make any further inquiries among the farming men, who were doubtless in their master's interest,

interest, would have proved of no avail, and I saw by his looks that the officer in possession had been in liquor the over night. The son, a young rascal, had gone off last night, under pretence of looking for a cottage for them in a neighbouring village, and no doubt he carried off all he could; and the father and mother had been no less provident, as they have taken all the portable articles they could lay hands on. I endeavoured to discover the road they had taken, but soon lost all traces of them, as they evidently did not keep the turnpike; I was so deucedly provoked at being thus robbed and outwitted, that at first I resolved to pursue them in every direction; but, upon cool reflection, I thought the first loss was the least: the brother has long been my friend, so I have suffered them to pursue their journey; indeed they may be more punished by my lenity, since what is to become of them? they have certainly the world before them, but they can never again shew their faces

where

where they are known; so having resolved to afford them plenty of *tether*, I wrote to you, Mr. Abinger, and again offer you the farm.'

"Now what would you have done, Mr. Martin, had you been in my place?"

"I would have taken the farm."

"And so did I, and upon what I call very fair terms; so behold me now tenant of Broomfields. I shall place a bailiff there till my eldest son leaves school, and then his dish will be ready crumbed for him; so this is my tale, Mr. Martin—and as you say the brother has absconded, I dare say the rogues are gone together."

"That may be, though I do not think the clerk would like to have such a family in his suite; however, I hope your late acquisition will turn out all you could wish. Mr. Chance, for a lawyer, appears to have shewn himself very lenient towards the Griffithses, and to have found excellent reasons for not having pursued them; between ourselves, may not he have connived

at their departure, and then made a merit of having suffered them to escape ?"

"I understand your meaning, Mr. Martin, and as I watched my gentleman's looks, I had my suspicions; but if it was not to his interest to make a stir in the business, I am sure it was not to mine; I only wish David had not been sent off—he would have suited me to a tittle: surely they cannot have made him believe he was going to Ireland, and then shipped him off for America—if so, he will certainly return, and what a splutter he will make! Altogether, 'tis passing strange; but I do not wish to have my private thoughts made public talk, so I affect to believe all was as Mr. Chance related; let my neighbours draw their own conclusions—I shall not assist them."

"You are very right; let those whom it may concern dive into the business—it cannot interest either you or me; time may lead to the discovery of every thing—so let us drop the subject."

The conversation now turned upon the colonel;

colonel; and at an early hour Martin retired for the night, convinced that lord Delmont had been the planner of all these sudden removals, thus, as he hoped, precluding the possibility of identifying his son's existence: possibly, were it of consequence, the farmer's family might be traced; but as Mr. Harland had resolved not to attack the earl, it could answer no purpose: still he was very anxious to relate the bustle which had followed their departure from Westbury. It was now evident the farm had by *Chance* got an owner, wondering whether this *mild* lawyer had asked any questions respecting the colonel or Mr. Harland. He could not ask farmer Abinger, whom he did not wish should suppose that their arrival had led to his having Broomfields, though he made no doubt that this Chance was among the tools of a man, who was doubtless moving heaven and earth to discover what had become of his son, since much as he had expended, and adroitly as he had removed

 his

his agents, he was still in the dark upon that very material point; and as it became every day more important that he should remain so, Martin resolved to start the next day.

CHAPTER VII.

He had just taken his seat at the breakfast-table, and was mentioning his intentions, when the maid-servant put her head into the room, saying—"Here is a man wants to speak with you, sir."

"Who is he?" asked the farmer.

"I don't know, sir; I never saw him before."

"Then tell him to come in; I shall not leave my breakfast, and he may be in haste. I have no secrets, Mr. Martin," he proceeded as the girl closed the door, "and you will excuse my asking this stranger in."

Before

Before Martin could reply, a short, middle-aged, sly-looking, though keen-eyed man entered the room, and advanced towards the table with more assurance than politeness, eyeing the yeoman and the valet in turn; he then cast his eyes round the room, and again renewed his scrutiny, from time to time glancing at a paper he held in his hand.

The farmer feeling justly offended by this scrutiny, started up, and fixing his eyes upon this rude visitor, exclaimed in no very gentle tone—"Who the devil are you, sir?—and what brought you here? please to inform me."

The stranger took off his hat, and bowing to the angry farmer, supposed he was master of the house.

"Suppose I am, what is that to you? so please to let me know your business, or I will soon shew you the shortest way out of it."

"Nay, my good sir, I am only doing my duty. I came hither in search of one

Griffiths, with whom you must have been acquainted; you have taken his farm of the present landlord."

"Then why did not you apply to him instead of to me? I never was intimate with this Griffiths, who Mr. Chance tells me is a rogue; now you may be a very honest man for any thing I know to the contrary, but to tell you my mind, I do not like the looks of you."

The sly retainer of the police, for such he was, or rather perhaps affected to be, burst out a-laughing.

Martin joined in the mirth; and this pleasing the farmer, he resumed his seat and his good humour, saying—"I cannot affront you it appears."

"Oh, I am not apt to take offence, my good sir. I seldom meet with a very cordial reception any where, as I am a police officer—of course very seldom a welcome guest. My business here is, or perhaps was, with James Griffiths; and I was assured that it was not improbable, admitting

ting he has not made his escape, that he might be here; but neither of you gentlemen answer to this description," reading a very correct one of Griffiths.

"Then we shall escape your grasp," cried the farmer; "but did you suppose that either of us would have been an easy capture?"

"Why you might have proved troublesome, but that is often dangerous, and never of much avail."

"May be not; so tell us what Griffiths has done, to be thus sought after. He has not committed murder I hope; if he has, I will do all in my power to assist in bringing him to justice."

"No, sir, he has not gone such desperate lengths; but as he is known to have been in a league with his brother, and a female who was the prime mover of the mischief, and who has committed forgery to a large amount, why, should he be taken, he may swing for his folly, as I believe he was only their tool. The brother

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and this woman, who would deceive even me, had placed a child many years ago with this James Griffiths, who was in fact their son; but this plotting pair, knowing that the earl of Delmont's eldest son had been stolen by gipsies during his infancy, were conspiring to bring this youth forward as the heir to that nobleman: by some well arranged plan they even deceived an uncle of the real young lord's into a belief that William Mansel was his long-lost nephew. The boy has however given them the go-by; so foreseeing that deception would not bring much grist to their mill, they had recourse to forgery. The two first have made their escape, and it is supposed James has followed them, though suspicions were entertained of his lying perdue near here; and as the earl is now furious, could he lay hold of any of them, would shew them no mercy. I came in search of this minor rogue, who, perhaps without being aware of the penalty, has passed some of the forged notes, and

and was no doubt in the conspiracy respecting the boy."

"Well, you have told us news," cried the farmer: "no wonder such a strange mystery hung about the youth you mention; but this I will say, he would not have disgraced a title: still these people seem to have been as great fools as they were knaves, since how they could hope to palm William Mansel upon the earl, passes my comprehension, as they must have declared they had first stolen him, which would not have been much in their favour; however, people do commit strange crimes to little purpose. Sit down and get your breakfast. I am only surprised Mr. Chance suffered Griffiths to escape."

The officer gave a very plausible reason —"The clerk was merely planning his own departure; had he gone first, the earl might have secured the farmer, but he was sent off before, as most likely to peach;" taking his leave after breakfast.

 "Well,

"Well, this is a new edition of the strange reports in circulation; I cannot believe this last tale."

"Nor I," said Martin; "but as I never saw the youth, I cannot judge whether this strange conspiracy ever existed," taking a very kind leave of the farmer and his wife, and departing fully convinced that the earl wished to crush in the bud the bare surmise that William Mansel was his son; and certainly the absence of all his agents enabled him with safety to denounce them for having entered into the supposed conspiracy, which it was hinted had deceived Mr. Harland: now over caution is often as likely to produce ill effects as the reverse, and his lordship might, by thus out-heroding the Griffithses' crimes, render his long lost son once more the subject of conversation—"though perhaps," thought Martin, as he proceeded towards Bristol, "this pretty tale is only meant to amuse farmer Abinger and me, and through our means to reach the colonel's and Mr. Harland's

Harland's ears," as it struck him upon reflection, that this supposed retainer of the police had been an outside passenger on the very coach he had come down in; if so, he had been probably sent as a spy upon his movements; this man certainly, in point of figure, tallied with a person who had hailed the coach at Hyde-park corner; he had then the appearance of a sailor, at least he was wrapped in a large blue grego, or corn sloper, which completely concealed his other dress.

The idea highly amused Martin, who enjoyed the earl's having put himself to this useless trouble and expence, in hopes, no doubt, of making some discovery respecting William Mansel, who, notwithstanding Mr. Harland's hint, he might fear, was under his protection; at all events he was resolved to spare no expence to ascertain his fate.—When the police officer had left farmer Abinger's, he had said he must, for form sake, pay a visit at Broomfields, that he might be able to give in a

proper report, and had taken the road leading thither, having received a direction to the house; when having reached the downs, upon suddenly turning round to look after a gentleman upon an unruly horse, he saw just near enough to be distinguished by the naked eye, the very man who was evidently watching his movements; at first, Martin thought he would wait his coming up, and enter into conversation with him; but before he had decided, the spy fancying he was observed, left the great road, and crossed towards Clifton; he had not had time to go to Broomfields and return, else Martin would have seen nothing extraordinary in his pursuing the same road he had done. Walking forward at his usual pace, he soon reached Park-street, when hastily returning, as if in search of something, he saw the man reconnoitring him from a distance through a glass; "how truly absurd," thought the amused valet, who quickened his pace to a run, convinced that

that he was followed; when darting into a stable yard, he stopped a few minutes to recover his breath, and upon again walking forward, had a perfect view of this police agent, who was certainly ordered not to lose sight of him: more and more diverted, he entered the coffee-room at the Bush Tavern, from the window of which he could see the Exchange and the Post-office; having taken a seat which enabled him to look up and down the street, and seized a newspaper, he again saw this thief-taker hurrying past, looking to the right and left, when he caught a glimpse of the valet, who smiled ironically, while the other touched his hat, and passed on. Whether he followed him to Salisbury, he was not so sure; from thence, he rode post to sir Charles Freeman's, where he found Mr. Harland, who had arrived the evening before; he therefore hastened to relate all he had heard and seen at Westbury.

"There's for you," cried the baronet,

"I

"I told you you would never be able to establish the youth's rights, and I dare say, should any of these minor rogues turn tail, there is a rod in pickle for them; I can only rejoice the poor lad has escaped their clutches; I only hope you gentlemen are now convinced that you must leave his rogue of a father to the stings of his own conscience; depend upon it, he is even now pretty well goaded by that invisible monitor, and no doubt gloriously perplexed respecting the fate of his son."

"And so I mean him to remain," replied Mr. Harland; "I shall, should he address me again, affect to be completely his dupe; and to render him mine, I will henceforth merely correspond with baron Villars, through the medium of my friend Du Verney; nor will I, for the ensuing twelve months, visit Switzerland; this will effectually lull his suspicions; and never shall the son of my beloved Emily be exposed to the machinations of this prince of plotters, since never shall he

know

know to whom he is indebted for his existence. As the adopted son of baron Villars, he is very happy, and as I shall make him my heir, he will require nothing at his wicked father's hands, who, sooner or later, will pay the penalty of his crimes towards his wife and this unoffending child, who will be much happier as a private gentleman, than he could be as the acknowledged heir to such a man, though the earl now stands upon the pinnacle of fame, and by those who do not know him, is considered as a paragon of goodness and excellence."

The colonel quite agreed with his friend, not choosing to mention what he meant to do for the young Edward, adding—"I think the earl will have some trouble with Mrs. Harland, if he has passed sentence of banishment upon her."

"She is so completely in his toils that she must continue to do his bidding," said the baronet; "and should she ever be forthcoming, it will only be to declare William Mansel

Mansel her son; or perhaps to prove that Marcus Mirvan died in his infancy. The earl's plans extend to futurity, I am convinced; nay, he may have a proper attested declaration to that effect now in his possession to produce, should you, Mr. Harland, *have been the dupe of the wicked conspiracy formed between her and Griffiths.*"

"I hope his wily lordship has ordered them to unite their destiny," said the merchant; "the promise of a considerable annuity may induce them to oblige him; yet I cannot suppose they were aware that he meant to accuse them of forgery: time may elucidate many things, but nothing shall now induce me to bring forward my nephew's claims, though I shall suffer the earl to continue ignorant of my resolution; should he write me any more fictions, I shall merely inform him that they are too puerile to deserve my attention, and that I give him great credit for having so completely involved the whole transaction in

a mystery

a mystery I shall never attempt to penetrate, since I find myself unable to cope with so experienced a statesman."

The baronet applauded the notion, and Martin only hoped the earl would draw forth the merchant's sentiments, as he felt assured that to find his arts and plans had failed to deceive, nay, even excited the contempt of a poor person so much his inferior, would be almost a sufficient punishment to so ambitious a man.

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT lord Delmont had ca usd every step of Mr. Harland and Martin to be watched, may be supposed; and as he found them so anxious to trace the fugitives, he first sent one of his tools to Broomfields to broach the fabrication of the conspiracy, upon which he meant to found, what

what he considered as a master-stroke of finesse, and which must prove the overthrow of any hopes which the merchant might entertain of proving that the dreaded William Mansel, and Marcus Mirvan, were the same; fortunately for this highly gifted youth, notwithstanding his every exertion, he had been completely baffled by the judicious precautions adopted by baron Villars, and by the very secluded life that gentleman and his adopted son led at his beautiful but lonely seat.

Mr. Carter, who might have directed the earl's suspicions to Berne Berg, had been very fortunately recalled to England by the death of his father; and as the baron was not to write to his friend Harland till he heard from that gentleman, eagerly as his lordship had in his official capacity sought to discover at the Post-office from whence them erchant's letters came, none met his eye that threw any light upon the subject next his heart, since the long detail Mr. Harland wrote the

the baron, when he had formed the resolution of suffering his nephew to continue Edward Melfort, had been dispatched into Switzerland by a commercial traveller attached to the firm of Du Verney & Co. under cover to whom the answer was to be sent.

A fortnight having elapsed since Mr. Harland's return to Smallbury Priory, the gentlemen supposed the earl hoped he had as completely succeeded in lulling Mr. Harland's suspicions as he had in removing his dramatis personæ, when a letter franked by this great man, and sealed with all the heraldic quarterings of which he was so proud, was presented to the merchant; who having glanced over the contents, read aloud as follows, for the benefit of his friends:—

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Since I last addressed you, I have made so many important discoveries, that

that I think it necessary to communicate the result of those inquiries which your avowed, and certainly very natural suspicions respecting the youth named William Mansel, induced me to set on foot. From various documents and letters, which I have, with great expence and some trouble, been able to procure, it appears certain that this youth, the son of my quondam valet and of my worthless cousin, was really intended at some future time to be brought forward to personate my deceased son, who was, I have every reason to believe, removed by this precious pair, that my coronet might grace the fruit of their adulterous intercourse. That the poor baby who became the victim of their perfidy is no more, I can produce what would in a court of justice be deemed sufficient proof; and I can as clearly make it appear that William Mansel was their son; he it seems absconded unknown to his wretched parents, who wished (it being likely to further their purpose)

purpose) that some mystery should appear to hang over his birth and expectations. For this end they doubtless contrived to excite the late Mr. Harland's suspicions; and probably from having intercepted some of his letters, you were fixed upon to bring forward his claims, as I have been able to trace them step by step through a maze of iniquity, which they hoped would eventually lead to this wretched boy being acknowledged as my heir. Probably, had they succeeded, they meant to have obliged their son to have rewarded them for the pains they had taken to promote his welfare.

"An overruling Providence defeated their villanous schemes. The boy, a very shrewd clever lad, who seemed to have inherited his mother's talents, ran away; and by dint of various inquiries, I have discovered, embarked at Bristol in the suit of an adventurer, who was bound for the Cape of Good Hope. The vessel, which was not seaworthy it is supposed, founder-

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ed on its passage; and thus fell to the ground all the Harland schemes of aggrandizement.

"Rendered desperate from various circumstances, the precious pair had recourse to forgery, in which they involved the brother of Griffiths, who had had the care of the boy. I did hope to have secured him, as from his depositions much might have been elicited; but conscious guilt, and being like them seriously involved, has driven him also into banishment. I shall not pursue the wretches, who will in the end be sufficiently punished; but I thought it necessary you should be made acquainted with the extent of their villany; and feeling now convinced that your nephew is no more, I shall, by giving them a bond of indemnity, so arrange matters with the gentlemen who hold the ten thousand pounds in trust for his use, that I make no doubt they will put you in immediate possession of the money; therefore favour me with a speedy answer—or

it

it might be better, could you make it convenient, to revisit London. Expecting therefore to either see, or hear from you in a few days,

"I remain, yours, &c.

"Delmont."

"Did you ever hear such a string of falsities as his lordship has committed to paper? Can he hope to render me the dupe of these gross forgeries?" cried the merchant.

"I dare say such are his expectations," rejoined the colonel; "at all events, he hopes this well-penned letter will either lead you to suppose you have been imposed upon, or that you will, by contradicting his assertions, enable him to discover the retreat of his son. Remember, he is not aware we read his letter to Mrs. Harland. Were I in your place, I should appear to believe his statements. He must shew you some of the papers upon which he grounds

grounds his fictions, when you must judge whether an unprejudiced person would credit their contents."

"He is playing a most desperate game with consummate ingenuity," exclaimed the baronet, who had been pondering over the letter; "and yet he might perhaps be caught in the toils he is spreading for you; but as you cannot pronounce him a liar without endangering your nephew's safety, let him suppose you have been in an error, since, if you can play the hypocrite with this agent of Lucifer, who must be his privy-counsellor, you may save your nephew's life; since the earl, I have always said, possesses every requisite talent to be a successful villain, and has still, no doubt, plenty of minor rogues ready to assert, nay to swear, just what he pleases; therefore, suffer him to proceed in his career of iniquity, through which we have traced him, to use his own words, step by step for many years, since I think he will yet receive a check before he dies;

at

at present, we three (his accomplices excepted) are the only people who are aware of his real character—so let us leave him to the judgment of that overruling Providence he so impiously asserts has hitherto aided his iniquitous schemes."

Mr. Harland agreed to the justice of these remarks, only hoping he should be able to deceive this plotting Machiavel, who seemed to render every thing and every body subservient to his deep-laid schemes; finally resolving to proceed to London the next morning. Martin, it was decided, should remain in Hampshire, as his every step would be watched by the earl's satellites; and the merchant had just engaged a valet, who had been strongly recommended by sir Charles's butler.

The earl's audacity and daring villany afforded the gentlemen an ample subject for conversation, and they could only suppose (which was the fact) that his lordship either hoped to render the merchant completely his dupe, or else to throw him sufficiently

ficiently off his guard to induce him to discover his son's retreat, and what steps he meant to pursue to induce him (the earl) to acknowledge their affinity.

CHAPTER IX.

WILLING to afford the wily peer every opportunity to arrange his plans, Mr. Harland, upon arriving at the hotel in Dover-street, sent his valet with a polite note to his lordship, requesting he would fix a time for receiving his visit, the letter he had favoured him with having rendered him very anxious to see the documents he had mentioned, since it was of material importance to have his unfortunate nephew's death clearly ascertained, as, till perfectly convinced that he had been deceived, he should continue to believe that he and William Mansel were one and the same

same person; he was therefore particularly anxious to have proof of that youth's having perished on shipboard.

The earl was not at home, but ere he retired for the night, Mr. Harland received a very polite invitation to take his breakfast at Delmont House.

The next morning, the merchant, who considered punctuality among the minor virtues, made his appearance at the appointed time in Piccadilly, and was introduced into the minister's private study, where he found his lordship and a gentlemanly good-looking man, the very Mr. Chance who had so lately purchased Broomfields; the name brought the circumstance to Mr. Harland's recollection, who presumed he had succeeded Griffiths in his post of confident.

Having taken a seat, the earl, who seemed anxious to proceed to business, thus began :—" You must suppose, my good sir, that after what you said respecting William Mansel, and what I have discovered

respecting his villanous father, I moved heaven and earth to obtain some farther information, and was in consequence given to understand that this gentleman had been his friend and agent, and had purchased the farm where his brother resided. To him I therefore applied, when I found he had been as grossly deceived as myself by this cunning rogue, who having placed various documents in his hands, which were of such a nature, they had, even before I applied to him, led him to suppose there were some wicked conspiracy existing between this Griffiths and Mrs. Harland, and some letters from her to the poor duped farmer brother, which he left behind him in his haste to escape, have thrown a much greater light upon the subject. You shall see them, and you will suppose their contents rendered me very anxious to trace the youth, whose private departure had so completely deranged their nefarious plans; and as far as presumptive evidence can prove the fact, he

embarked

embarked, as I wrote you, at Bristol, and possibly met a watery grave, to convince his wretched parents that he was doomed to expiate their sins. Having entered into this summary detail, we will now have our breakfast; after which, the various papers I have mentioned shall be submitted to your inspection, as you are nearly as deeply interested in their contents as I feel myself to be, and have a right to be made acquainted with every circumstance at all connected with this conspiracy."

Mr. Harland had listened very attentively; and being fully prepared for this exordium by his lordship's letter, he even played his part better than the earl, having no point to carry, and being fully aware of his adversary's deep game. Mr. Chance's story was equally well told: he accounted in so plausible a manner for the papers having fallen into his hands, that the merchant felt that he should have placed implicit

plicit faith in his assertions, had he not been so much better informed.

The documents were chiefly letters, written, it appeared, by Mr. Harland, to the clerk and to the farmer, and sufficiently ambiguously worded, merely to be understood by those who were in the secret. Some were mutilated; in others some lines were erased; but they all tended to establish that William Mansel was her son, by the clerk.

Other memorandums were also produced, in Griffiths's writing. One ran thus:—"W. M. buried as J. G. at St. James's, Clerkenwell, fifteenth November, 18—." This the earl particularly pointed out as alluding to his lost son; and Mr. Chance produced a certificate of the burial of John Griffiths, an illegitimate child, parents unknown, whose age certainly tallied with that of the lost Marcus; and the letters often alluded to this boy, whose death appeared to have led to the

conspiracy

conspiracy to substitute W. M. in his room. In short, so well was the plan laid, that Mr. Harland would not have doubted the authenticity of these memorials, had not W. M. been the living image of his father, blended with a strong cast of his late sister, and had not he borne the mark by which the latter had hoped his person would be identified; sincere therefore was his mental thanksgiving for the wonderful escape of this much-injured youth, whose claims, he was now fully convinced, he should never have been able to substantiate. Whether the hand-writing of one, or of both parties, were forged, he was no judge; or whether these papers had been prepared in case he attacked the earl: at all events, they were most skilfully worded, since even their ambiguity might be considered as a proof of their authenticity; and though the interest the earl appeared to take in them was merely fine acting, he performed his part so well, that any unprejudiced person must have con-

sidered him as a deeply-injured man, who had been most grossly wronged and deceived by the Griffiths and Harland junto. Under this persuasion the merchant appeared to share in his indignation, and to be perfectly convinced of the villany of the writers of the letters; and as he spoke his real sentiments when he declared that hanging would be too mild a punishment for two out of the three, the earl was rejoiced at having, though at considerable expence, some risk, and more trouble, rendered him so completely his dupe.

The very few natural doubts Mr. Harland allowed himself to express, were very easily cleared up, perfectly, it appeared, to his satisfaction; and the following day, as the earl was really sincere respecting the money, having previously brought the trustees into his way of thinking, those gentlemen made no difficulty of giving up the principal sum to Mr. Harland, upon receiving a joint bond of indemnification from the earl and him; and as the merchant

chant scorned to mention the interest, the earl led to the subject, by saying, it would about cover the immense expence the loss of his son had led to his incurring. Mr. Harland hoped it would; and thus they parted, apparently friends, each secretly hoping they should never meet again, except by chance; the earl, priding himself upon having thus rendered William Mansel's claims perfectly nugatory, since he yet dreaded his again appearing to enforce them; though if Mr. Harland was really his dupe, he would certainly not afford them his sanction; still, in spite of his better reason, these doubts would arise, and completely damp the triumph he sometimes felt at having so completely overreached his opponent. The refunding the money he considered a master stroke; and Mr. Harland's having received it, and joined in the bond, he thought amounted to proof positive of his ignorance respecting his nephew's fate; still he was in constant dread

 of

of one or other of his agents disclosing his secret manœuvres; yet they were so closely entwined with his own fate, that they could not impeach him without criminating themselves; still to feel himself even allied to them in guilt, was most galling to his haughty mind—how much therefore were those mistaken, who considered this proud statesman as not only the most prosperous, but the most meritorious favourite of fortune!

Mr. Harland, according to his solemn promise, returned into Hampshire, as soon as he had received the money, when he related every occurrence that had taken place.

The baronet gave him great credit for his forbearance. There was now every hope that Edward Melfort would never again be exposed to the machinations of his father, for whom his former dislike was now converted into abhorrence, priding himself not a little upon his former prognostics.

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The colonel agreed he had formed a very just estimate of the earl's character, sincerely rejoicing at Mr. Harland's having so prudently withdrawn from such an unequal contest. The promotion of Mr. Chance to the place which Griffiths had vacated, merely convinced them that the earl had added another link to the chain which already bore him down, and which would, in the end, prove as severe a punishment as they could wish him to endure.

CHAPTER X.

The disappearance of the brothers Griffiths, not to mention the departure of Mrs. Harland and her Welch *protégé*, were so generally canvassed, particularly their motives for having absconded, that, as might be supposed, the circumstances attending their departure, with the various surmises of the editors, were related in some of the provincial, and most of the London papers, by which means it attracted the notice of our Bristol acquaintance Mr. Arlington, who having received the paper to which he gave the preference, inquired — "Which of you girls are to read me the news to-day?"

"Not me," cried the eldest, yet taking up the paper while speaking; "I shall only glance over the marriages and deaths; I hate

I hate politics worse than the prices current. No one of any consequence is mentioned, so I am going to dress."

"I admire your airs, Miss Anne," cried the angry father; "you had best not provoke me!"

The door having closed after the young lady, he desired Ellen to become lecturer, who, making no objection, having waded through the two first pages, read a garbled account of Griffiths having gone off, after robbing government to a great amount; of his brother, late a farmer in that neighbourhood, being implicated in his crimes, as it was strongly suspected that they, in concert with a lady, nearly connected with a very noble family, had removed the son and heir of an earl, high in office, who, having discovered their villany, was making such researches as must ultimately lead to his restoration, with various other inuendos respecting William Mansel, the supposed high-born youth. Throwing down the paper, the lovely girl gave way to

to an hysteric burst of tears, sobbing out—"I always thought he was no connexion of those odious Griffithses; he had not an idea in common with that grovelling set. I hope they will all be brought to justice."

"There, there!" cried her now kind father. "Why, I thought you would hardly injure a dog that had bit you, and now you are wishing half a dozen people may be hanged or transported. What, you have not forgot your former playfellow! but do not place any faith in these mere newspaper reports, child. I agree with you, Mansel was a remarkably clever boy; but that is no proof of his being the son of a great man. However, he has my good wishes wherever he is, poor fellow! Indeed I believe I treated him too harshly; so should we ever meet again, I will make him amends; therefore dry your tears, my sweet Ellen, and consider what you have been reading as mere hearsay, which is very likely to be contradicted to-morrow; if not, we shall soon learn more particulars.

I will

I will drive to Bristol, and question the printer of the paper; he may be able to throw some light upon a subject in which I feel seriously interested."

Ellen felt she had never loved her father so sincerely; while Mrs. Arlington expressed her hopes that they should see the clever youth reinstated in his proper rank, speaking of him in the highest terms, and doing the greatest justice to his merits.

Miss Arlington laughed at the paragraph as mere nonsense, declaring, to her, William Mansel had always appeared a forward, impudent boy, who had been spoiled by too much notice. Such prodigies generally made a bad finish, instancing Chatterton, and some others; however, she wished the boy no harm, though he never had, nor ever would be, a favourite of hers—not that she supposed they should ever see the phœnix again, particularly if his romance wound up to his advantage.

Mrs. Arlington was sorry she still re-

sented

sented the preference Mansel had always displayed for her sister, merely because she had always behaved kindly to him.

Miss Arlington laughed in scorn at the insinuation, deriding the idea of her father giving himself the trouble to make any inquiries respecting such nonsense: possibly she could not have taken a more likely means to make the obstinate old man persevere in his intentions, as he drove immediately to the printer's; but all he learnt of him was, that the paragraph had been copied from a London newspaper; and as it seemed to allude to some transactions in the neighbourhood, it had been inserted.

"Well, how you could appear to feel any interest in such nonsense," exclaimed Miss Arlington, when her father gave in his report, "I cannot conceive;" while Ellen, who firmly believed, owing to the hint she had received from colonel Murray, that her favourite would appear in a very different character should they meet again, declared herself much obliged to her

her father; and had the pleasure of finding her mother entertained the same hopes and expectations, since, as she had always understood there was a degree of mystery attached to this youth, why should it not terminate favourably?

Very different was the impression that this, and various other allusions to the same circumstance, made upon the countess of Delmont, who, rendered more querulous by the earl's increasing abstraction, seized the first opportunity of a *tête-à-tête* to demand, in a much haughtier tone than she had ever dared to assume, an explanation of these repeated paragraphs.

The earl, who was even privy to some of them, as he wished the world to know and believe what he had written and related to Mr. Harland, with great condescension entered into those details we have already narrated. A sensible woman would, even had she not believed the tale, have appeared to do so; but in fact it was so well told, and so well arranged, that it might

might have deceived much wiser people; but the countess was a fool; and mistaking causes for consequences, she did not choose to be convinced. She recapitulated all the earl had told her previous to their marriage, declaring, that she should not survive what she should consider as the disgrace of her son.

"Then God forgive the sin, if a sin it is, of wishing you in a world where you must acquire, or soon be expelled, better sense and better temper!"

Such a severe apostrophe merely added fuel to flame; and his lordship found it more difficult to parry the gross speeches of this modern fine lady, than he had ever found it to keep his own temper when hard pressed by the opposition. She descended to the most galling reproaches—accused him of having lavished enormous sums upon the guilty Mrs. Harland, who, she made no doubt, was at some future period to bring forward this long-lost son, merely to dispossess her beloved George of his rightful

rightful inheritance, when possibly this very boy was in fact his son, by that worthless woman.

Her impotent rage had, however, the good effect of recalling reason to her lord's mind ere he wreaked his vengeance in manual chastisement; contempt succeeded anger, as he laughed in scorn at her weak threats, merely advising her, if she wished to continue to enjoy the society of her children, and to continue the ostensible mistress of his house, she would never again mention his lost son, assuring her that he never more sincerely regretted his death, since most happy should he have been to have acknowledged him as his firstborn, leaving her to digest this serious remonstrance; and as she was as selfish as she was vain, she contented herself with abusing the peer to his daughter, and with fostering all the evil propensities of her sons, not aware that these follies would bitterly recoil upon herself: while her irascible lord became assailed,

ed, such was the irritable state of his nerves, by a thousand wild, chimerical, and even superstitious fears, since he was aware that the various reports in circulation respecting the Griffithses and his son had laid him open to some censure, as he was known to have patronized the worthless woman, upon whom he endeavoured to shift all the blame; but his lady's whispers had their effect; and though no one spoke their real sentiments, many inuendoes crept into the public prints, which certainly impeached his private, if not his public character.

The baronet, his nephew, and Mr. Harland, who continued the former's guest, were much amused by the various strictures they read, agreeing that if his lordship had any feeling, he must be sorely mortified; and had they known how joyless his heart was become, and what a field of anxious and fearful apprehension the future disclosed to him, they would have agreed that his punishment was begun.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XI

SCARCELY had the earl congratulated himself upon having so effectually silenced his lady, and having, as he hoped, ascertained that neither Mr. Harland nor the colonel were wiser than himself respecting the fate of William Mansel—he had besides so openly discussed his family story, not appearing to shrink from any inquiry, that his popularity was fast returning—when his feelings were again roused by the brutal conduct of the son, for whose welfare he had plunged so deeply into guilt.

Lord Exmore had made some progress at Eton, and was considered as possessing some talents; but his tyrannical temper rendered him the dislike of those who did not feel the necessity of paying court to the loaves and fishes; and the papers had of

of late enabled them to torment him in the most provoking manner—some prognosticating that his pride would find its level—others inquiring whether he was at all acquainted with this elder brother, who was so much talked of—others asked a farther explanation of such and such paragraph, till his angry passions were so roused, that he struck a very delicate boy, who happened to be his fag, for asking him whether he would be lord George or Mr. Mirvan, should this brother appear. The youth, who was the son and heir of a rich country gentleman, with more spirit than strength, returned the blow; when the savage youth first knocked him down, and then began to kick him most violently, while lying senseless, and would probably have absolutely killed him, had not some other boys rushed to his assistance, and dragged lord Exmore to a distance—and, while others raised what to them appeared the corpse of the younger boy, some ran to call the ushers, who instantly obeyed the

the summons, or probably the young brute would have suffered the immediate punishment due to his barbarity; he was still foaming with rage, when the masters ordered him to be strictly confined, while his victim was conveyed to bed, and medical assistance immediately called in. The physician and surgeon, upon examining the injury he had received, declared his life might pay the forfeit of the young lord's barbarity—since one bruise had affected a vital part, and the child was of a very weakly constitution; and it was remarked by the head master, that much as the scholars appeared interested for the victim of his ungovernable rage, they were all perfectly reconciled to the idea of the youthful barbarian being hanged for murder.

An express was immediately dispatched to the minister, who feared the work of retribution was begun, leaving his weak wife in fits, during the intervals of which she declared she should never survive the shock,

shock, should her son be arraigned for murder. Possibly the earl would not have regretted her death, but he most severely felt the predicament in which his acknowledged heir stood, linked as he was to this savage by the mysterious tie of nature, by the indissoluble regulations of society, and by the, to him, still more forcible, though less tender, bonds of family interest and honour. It was with difficulty he met this terrible demand upon his fortitude; but calling to his aid all his self-possession, he immediately summoned his own physician and surgeon, with whom he proceeded to Eton; and never did he appear to greater advantage; to the masters he seemed the most amiable of men, and the most unfortunate of fathers—to the parents of the suffering boy he appeared to participate in their heart-felt grief—while towards his criminal son he shewed himself the stern offended judge, declaring he would not trust himself in his presence, merely requesting he might be kept in

strict

strict confinement, till the victim of his ungovernable temper was either out of danger, or no more, as he wished him to pay the full penalty of his crime. Most fortunately, as he then conceived, the suffering boy was pronounced in a fair way of recovery the second day after the earl's visit to Eton, who was now requested, in the politest terms, to remove lord Exmore from thence, since the young gentlemen had all declared they would never again associate with this youthful gladiator. The minister, who had obtained the greatest credit for his noble behaviour upon this trying occasion, was prepared for this request, therefore immediately sent for his son home, declaring himself much obliged to those of his companions who had insisted upon his removal, since his present disgrace might induce him to keep a very strict guard over his temper in future; and within the week after his expulsion from Eton, lord Exmore was upon the road to Geneva, with a private tutor of great ta-

 lents

lents and known integrity, and in whom the earl vested the fullest authority over the delinquent, who was to remain abroad till Mr. Batson declared he had worked a perfect reform in his disposition.

In vain did the countess plead for a mitigation of what she deemed so hard a sentence; the earl was inexorable, inquiring what public or even private seminary would receive a boy who had displayed such savage propensities, which had been fostered by her blind indulgence; declaring that he would place her younger son where he would at all events be prevented from increasing the stigma and disgrace which lord Exmore had brought upon the family.

Never in fact had the spectre conscience appeared in more formidable array to his lordship; in vain did he attempt to banish William Mansel from his recollection, and bitterly did he now regret the not knowing where to find him—since, spite of all he had said or done to invalidate his claims, he

he would at this moment have fondly relied upon him as the comforter of his future life, and have elevated him to that rank which the supposed lord Exmore was so likely to disgrace, who had thrown such a dark shadow over his future prospects, that no efforts might be able to remove. And the young Adolphus was even less likely to do honour to the boasted name of Delmont; he was now placed with a very excellent man, a clergyman, under whose care the earl hoped he might be taught at least enough to enable him to hold some sinecure place, which might provide for his future wants.

CHAPTER XII.

The events mentioned in the last chapter of course found their way into the papers, and were in consequence fully canvassed at Smallbury Priory. Sir Charles exulted in what he considered must be so galling to the earl, who he made no doubt sincerely regretted having condemned his eldest son to obscurity and poverty, since lord Exmore was such a chip of the old block.—" Yes, yes, he is the earl in miniature, without his French plate to varnish over his vices."

The colonel was sorry to hear of such depravity in such a boy; while Mr. Harland rejoiced he had escaped hanging, since though no one but themselves would have been aware of the circumstance, he should

should have fancied it a sort of disgrace attached to his nephew.

As the autumn was now drawing on, Mr. Harland told his host he must pay the Continent another visit; business called him to Hamburgh, though he proposed wintering in the south of France, which had been recommended to him ere he left Russia.

"I was advised to do the same," said the colonel; "and I fear if I do not remove into a warmer climate, I shall severely feel the damp and fogs of England."

Sir Charles did not approve of their plans, hinting they were only anxious to see *Edward Melfort.*

"Admitted, uncle; but you cannot suppose that either Mr. Harland or I would gratify our wishes at the present moment; upon the Continent, we shall always be able to hear of his welfare—that must suffice till we can visit Switzerland, without exposing the dear boy to his unnatural father's machinations; a twelve-

month hence, we may safely seek the good baron Villars—at present, I would go five hundred miles round, rather than approach his seat."

Mr. Harland argued to the same effect, telling the colonel that to enjoy his society he would content himself with writing to Hamburgh, and would proceed with him to Avignon, where he seemed to wish to take up his quarters.

The baronet, who was aware that his nephew's complaints were thought to be of a pulmonary nature, and whose physician had by the colonel's desire hinted that a winter in England might prove very prejudicial to him, at last acceded to their wishes, making them promise to correspond with him very punctually—agreeing to their resolution, never in the remotest manner to allude to Edward Melfort.

Having thus settled their plans, the gentlemen, merely attended by their respective valets, proceeded to London, and from

from thence to Dover, and after a pleasant passage, they landed at Calais, from whence the colonel wrote his uncle a very gay letter; and as Mr. Harland had business at Ostend with a sort of half-trading merchant, who was settled there, they agreed to proceed there first, and to go from thence to Brussels, where Mr. Harland had a friend also in business, who would make a point of shewing them every thing worthy notice. Suffice it to say, that rather contrary to his expectations, the merchant succeeded in recovering what he considered as a bad debt; and nothing having occurred to detain them, they reached Ghent to a late dinner on the second day, where they had resolved to spend the night.

Martin was a very good linguist, and they had engaged a courier as a further precaution, who was amusing the valets while at dinner with some anecdotes of a former eccentric master, when an old Flemish female came into their room to

 inquire

inquire whether either of the gentlemen in whose suite they were were clergymen, as an Englishwoman, who was lying at the point of death, was very anxious to see a priest of her own religion.

Martin replied in the negative, expressing his regret for his countrywoman's situation, inquiring whether she spoke French?

"Oh no, more is the pity; but as I understand a few words of English, I was engaged to attend upon her. She is much to be pitied. She was left here about two months ago by her master and mistress, who were going to Brussels, and who were, as she supposed, to have returned here in three weeks at farthest; but they have left her to die among strangers, of a broken limb, which not having been properly treated at first, is now in a state of mortification, and she is raving for an English clergyman to come and pray by her."

"Poor soul!" replied the feeling Martin; "I

"I will visit her, as I can read prayers to her; and she may have something to settle, or some message to send her friends—so lead me to her."

The woman readily did so, telling him as they went along, that the gentleman and lady who had left her behind had given her (the nurse) sufficient money for immediate use; but not having returned according to promise, the poor soul had been greatly distressed, and obliged to part with all she was worth. Having reached a very mean habitation, the nurse led him into a back room upon the ground-floor, where the invalid was lying in a dirty bed or crib affixed to the wall; a ragged curtain half shaded the wretched couch; and while the guide was lighting her lamp, Martin heard the person he was come to see muttering in a language he did not understand.—"This is all a take-in," thought he; but the moment the curtain was undrawn, and the light displayed his features to the sufferer, she exclaimed

 —"Oh

—"Oh, Mr. Martin, is it you? how came you to find me out?"

"Who are you?" cried the now surprised valet. "Where did you ever see me before?"

"At Eskdale in Wales," she feebly replied.

"Is it possible?" inquired Martin; "is your name Gwynne?"

"Yes, yes—miserable wretch that I am! oh have pity on me, for I am dying by inches!"

"She seems to know you, sir," said the nurse; "I can hardly ever understand what she wants; she gibbers so sometimes."

"I have seen her before, so leave us together, and prepare something for her to take. What would you like, Mrs. Gwynne?"

"I am sure I cannot tell; I have been half poisoned with what they have given me, and have hardly had enough to keep life and soul together; but I am justly punished—

nished—it will come home to us all, sooner or later, as the Bible says. I hope the martyrdom I have undergone since I left my own dear country will help to expiate my sins; but, wicked as I have been, I know those who have done worse; when they are like me, upon their deathbed, their sins will rise up in judgment against them. I shall never see the sun rise again; these doctors, as they call them, say they cannot do any more for me; they had better never have meddled with me—then I might have been spared a little longer, and not have been such a dreadful sufferer; but I believe they delighted in punishing a heretic, as they call me; well, if they have but saved my soul, I ought to forgive them. Had such an accident befallen me in my own dear country, I should have been about long since; but what could such a poor wretch as I am expect in a foreign land, without money? I shall be buried like a dog, I dare say!"

"I will procure you Christian burial,"

said

said Martin, "if you should not recover; but as I have money, we will see what can be done to save your life."

"God bless and reward you, Mr. Martin! but how came you to seek me out in this pigstye—did Mrs. Harland that was send you to me? has her conscience pricked her at last? though I dare say she thought I was dead."

"I assure you I am no emissary of that lady; your nurse stumbled upon me by chance, while inquiring for a clergyman. My master and Mr. Harland stopped here in their road to Brussels; and as I felt interested for a countrywoman in distress, I accompanied her to you."

"God only can reward you; but I am afraid if you had known who you were coming to see, you would not have taken so much trouble."

"You do not do me justice if you suppose so; indeed I should have had an additional motive for coming to your relief, since you have it in your power to repay me

me for any assistance I may be able to afford you; since, if you think yourself dying, you will do well to unburthen your mind; you may rely upon my prudence, and I give you my honour I will take no improper advantage of your communications."

"You are a very good man, Mr. Martin, and I do not wish to have any reserves with you; but I have very little of consequence to impart. Oh, had I known how I was going to be trepanned from home, and left to die among strangers, they should not have found me such an easy dupe! Mrs. Harland was very much in my power, and she has shewn me no mercy when she had me in hers; but do pray, Mr. Martin, let me have a little warm brandy and water, I feel such a sinking, and then I will tell you all I know. Mrs. Harland said you must have dealings with the old one, to know so much as you did; you alarmed her and all her accomplices most charmingly."

While

While she paused for breath, Martin having sent for some brandy and water, gave her enough to raise her spirits without affecting her head; when she was able to resume her discourse, she was beginning from the time she had seen him in Wales, but he cut her short, telling her he knew when and how she had left Eskdale, and her having met a Mr. Griffiths at Gloucester, with whom she proceeded to London; she was lost in amaze, declaring he seemed more than a match for Mrs. Harland—"Well, Mr. Martin, this Mr. Griffiths took me to some mean house, where madam gave me the meeting, and strict orders never to stir from home, nor to ask any questions, as before I could be settled in an almshouse I was to accompany Mrs. Harland abroad."

"I know you did leave London with her and Griffiths, and that you all separated at Canterbury—so tell me how you proceeded afterwards."

"The Lord be good unto me! why you must

must have followed us about. Well, at Canterbury, Mr. Griffiths had arranged that we were all to take different coaches, and to proceed to different towns on the sea-coast, and yet we were all to meet again within an hour after our arrival; he made it all out very clear. Mrs. Harland went to Ramsgate, where we were to take shipping, I went to Margate, and Mr. Griffiths to Sandwich, who called for me in a postchaise, as he had promised; and within two hours we all joined company again; next morning we embarked for Ostend, where we landed more dead than alive, it being what they called a very rough sea, and sorry enough I was that I had ever left England: we had passports in feigned names, I now discovered, and I also found my companions were very much afraid of being traced; but I could not understand half what they said or meant. At last we set out in a long boat, towed by horses. Mrs. Harland agreed to appearing as my mistress; and

and Mr. Griffiths was now to be styled her husband, and they were going to see their daughters in a convent somewhere. Oh, such lies as they hatched up to deceive those we might meet, or who might be sent in pursuit! I cannot tell you where we slept the first night, but Mr. Griffiths went out in the morning, and was gone so long, madam became quite fidgetty, thinking, it is my belief, he had given us the go-by; I only wish he had; instead of that, he told her all went upon velvet; those were his words. Money had settled every objection; and in less than another hour, they were what they called married; I was present during the ceremony, which, in my opinion, was no better than jumping over the broomstick; however, as they were satisfied, it was nothing to me; I only understood they had married to oblige a relation of madam's, about whom they often laughed, boasting they should have him at the best, if he did not come to their terms. But

next

next morning we proceeded in another boat, and I was now addressed as nurse, and heard them tell some English people that they had brought me over to see their daughters, whom I had nursed. Lord! I could have spit in their faces, I was so mad to find they were making such a fool of me. But they had not done with me, to my sorrow; for, as I was going up the ladder to breathe a mouthful of fresh air, feeling very sick, just as I had reached the top, a rope, by which the nasty conveyance was towed along, crossed me with such violence, it threw me backwards; and as I fell upon an iron shovel, I broke my thigh; so here they left me to perish, glad enough I am sure to get rid of me."

"Those ladders are very ugly things," said Martin.

The wretched sinner groaned, or rather yelled, bursting into a flood of tears.

The worthy fellow was sorry he had so severely probed her feelings; therefore, having suffered her to recover herself, he said

said—"I had no intention to reproach you, Mrs. Gwynne; mine was a mere natural remark."

"I believe you, Mr. Martin; I only wish I had staid below. But will you pray by me, as there are no English parsons here? My nurse wanted me to see her confessor, but what good could he have done me? I should not have believed in what she calls absolution. I only wish no sins lay heavy at my heart. Mrs. Harland certainly did prevent my being exposed to a public trial; but it might have been better for me if she had been less officious. I was foolishly indulged by my parents; and when I married, I was too old to mend. My husband used to thwart me; he was a very industrious, but a very bad-tempered man, so scarce a day passed without our having words. But I solemnly declare, when I shook the ladder in a rage, I had no intention to do him a mischief, so I hope I shall be judged more favourably by God than by man."

"There

"There are no bounds to the mercy of our Heavenly Father; and as you are truly penitent, and have been a great sufferer, surely you may hope to be forgiven; so now tell me what has become of Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths."

"That I am sure I do not know; but you have a right to be made acquainted with all I do know, which is very little. Possibly you are in pursuit of them; I know they were afraid of somebody being sent after them. They have committed, or connived at some great crimes, I am certain; but *Mr. Mirvan* is to pay for all, they say, should any evil befall them. Finding how I had been deceived, as they as good as told me I should never return to England, except I chose to be hanged for murder, not only of my husband, but of my late master; so if I let my tongue run, I knew the consequence. Such wicked threats quite frightened me, and very anxious I was to learn where we were going.—'To some island,' if I understood right, 'where

'where it is summer all the year round, and where they were to indulge in beautiful oranges, and many other fine things; but we had many miles to travel before we were to embark."

The entrance of two surgeons broke in upon her discourse. The old nurse, who had met them in the passage, had prepared them to see the valet, who now took his leave, having previously asked those gentlemen, in French, whether their patient's case was absolutely desperate.

They assured him they had not expected to find her alive, entering into various details, tending to display their skill and disinterestedness.

Martin understood their hints, but chose to retire, merely telling them that he would be answerable for every future expence, and promising the weeping Gwynne to see her again in the morning.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARTIN gave in his report to the gentlemen as soon as he returned, who agreed the poor old wretch had paid very dear for trusting to Mrs. Harland's fine promises, sending for the landlord, the valet having understood they had stopped at his house, to make farther inquiries, and were gratified to hear he had been very charitable to the invalid, who had been carried, upon landing, to the house where she now was, one of the men belonging to the vessel having recommended his mother to nurse her.

Mr. and Mrs. *Parker*, her master and mistress, had stopped one night at Ghent, having proceeded next morning to Brussels in a one-horse cabriolet, which they had purchased of him, as well as the beast which

which drew it. They were not to be gone more than a fortnight at farthest, when they were to return, to see after the old woman, for whose wants they appeared to have amply provided; but as they had never been heard of from that time to this, she had been left to starve. He had sent her broth, and the surgeons had attended her gratis; the nurse had been the most rapacious. The gentlemen did not affect to know the *Parkers*, merely promising, as she was a countrywoman, to leave money for her funeral; and as the poor wretch died during the night, our travellers obtained the credit of being very generous for what they deemed a very trifling sum, though they satisfied both surgeons and nurse, and left ample funds for the funeral.

Having reached Brussels, Mr. Harland's friend, upon learning their arrival, insisted upon their taking up their abode at his house, where they found themselves very pleasantly domesticated, as he was a bachelor,

lor, and very anxious to return the many civilities he had received in Russia from our merchant, who, like the colonel, was rather curious to know whether the new-married couple had visited Brussels—not that they wished to see them, or even to trace their route, since they were quite satisfied with having obliged them to become exiles, and hoped they would make *Mr. Mirvan*, who was doubtless the earl, bitterly repent having sent them into banishment. Mr. H——land thought his late manœuvres might have the effect of keeping them quiet; at all events they would probably drag on a miserable existence among strangers, and die, like the old Welchwoman, unknown and unregretted.

Martin, who had, under the rose, made various inquiries respecting the precious pair, felt assured they had not visited Brussels. On the second morning, as he was rambling alone, he found himself upon the banks of the river, and was surprised at the number of barges and other craft that

that were loading and unloading their cargoes, when his attention was attracted by a person, whom he supposed to be a British naval officer—his blue frock, brass buttons, and black handkerchief, led to the surmise; but on perceiving his fierce mustachios, he conceived he was a German, when, as he passed him, the sort of under leer with which he regarded him, and a sort of jerking movement of his left leg, induced him to tax his memory as to who he reminded him of. The countenance was not familiar to him; a moment's recollection induced him to hasten after him; and having, in defiance of politeness, stared him full in the face, the stranger made a pause, when Martin, certain he was not mistaken, said—"I beg your pardon, Mr. Thief-catcher! I thought I recollected you. How have you done since you left Bristol?"

The person he addressed asked him, in very tolerable French—"What he meant by his rude behaviour?"

"I merely

"I merely wished to renew my acquaintance with you," was the reply, in the same language. "Have you traced the farmer, or clerk Griffiths to Brussels?"

"I neither know you, nor what you mean," walking forward.

"Then my memory is better than yours. But perhaps I did not address you by your proper title. Perhaps you call yourself a police clerk, alias a spy. I am not your dupe, so tell me whether you are seeking the Griffithses—I may be able to direct your search."

The stranger either was, or affected to be, in a great rage; putting himself in a boxing attitude, he declared he would make him eat his words; and probably, had not Martin drawn back, he would have struck him.

The valet, who seldom lost his temper, and who did not wish to get into a quarrel in a foreign country, calmly told his opponent, that he had given proof posi-

 tive

tive of his understanding English by feeling offended; "however, instead of making you eat your words," he continued, "I shall be satisfied by seeing you make a meal of your whiskers;" and as the fellow stood daring him to fight, Martin, by a dexterous grasp, caught hold of his mustachios, which easily giving way, remained between his finger and thumb, to the great amusement of the now-collected crowd.

The angry police-officer now laid about him with all his might, while Martin, who merely kept him at bay, told him in English he had better remain quiet, since he might not meet with the same protection at Brussels as he would in London, where he might summon any blackguards to his assistance.

Enraged beyond all endurance, the fellow followed Martin to the water's edge, where the valet made a stand, telling his opponent, in a determined tone, "that if he

he made another stroke at him, he would throw him into the river to cool his courage."

What might have followed this threat must be left to conjecture, since a stout raw-boned fellow stepped forward from amongst the crowd, and seizing hold of the police-officer, exclaimed—"I will save you a ducking, by taking you to the town-house. I have overheard your conversation, and I understand English. This gentleman accused you of being a spy, and it is necessary that that should be proved or refuted," desiring Martin to follow them.

Neither the latter nor the police-officer enjoyed this interruption of their quarrel, as they soon understood that the person who addressed them could command obedience; the valet however explained. He had not rightly understood his accusation; he merely meant to insinuate his countryman (who had been very silly to deny that fact) had been watching his motions, but

but did not mean to accuse him of any evil intentions towards the government.

"That might be; but in these times, there were so many traitors to the state, he chose to have the matter properly explained."

Resistance would have now been folly, therefore to the town-house they proceeded, attended by a crowd, which increased every minute.

The earl's agent, for such he was, was very sorry he had not acted very differently; he ought to have recollected Martin, and have told him a plausible story to account for his disguise, and being at Brussels; and Martin wished he had suffered him to pass unobserved.

The agent having formed his determination, immediately addressed their conductor in his native tongue, telling him that he would satisfy any magistrate of the purity of his intentions, agreeing that he was to blame for not having acknowledged his identity to Mr. Martin, whom he

knew

knew to be the secretary of an officer of high rank; but he had been so strictly ordered to preserve his *incognito*, hinting he was come in search of some wretched delinquents, whom, it was hoped, would be given up by the king of the Netherlands. The Flemish officer made no doubt of his veracity; and as he requested that the secertary to the British embassy might be sent for, to vouch for the truth of his statements, the business was very speedily settled, much to Martin's satisfaction, who resolved to be less clear-sighted in future; and as it appeared that this police retainer was in search of clerk Griffiths, Mr. Harland and the colonel thought it possible that he might be engaged in a double pursuit; but not liking to have their movements watched, they left Brussels sooner than they intended, and proceeded to Paris, unattended, they had every reason to believe, by the disguised agent. Had the autumn been less advanced, they would have spent some

 time

time in that gay capital; but as it was, they hastened to Montpellier, where they had resolved to winter, and where they soon found themselves very pleasantly situated.

Letters from baron Villars, in answer to theirs from England, had met them at Paris. He was delighted to find that Edward Melfort might now be considered as his son—as such he should ever love him. The Swiss world were not so fastidious respecting legitimacy as they were in England; and he thought it most fortunate that the neglect with which he had been treated by those with whom he had been placed in early life, had prevented his being sensible of any stronger tie than the one his love for him had formed between them; he was now his own boy, and to the last hour of his (the baron's) life, he should find in him the father and friend he had promised to be when he removed him from England.

The baron next mentioned Mr. Carter's departure,

departure, adding, that he was half inclined to place the dear youth under the care of some sensible man at Geneva for a couple of years, that he might attend the lectures of the professors attached to the college in that city, and mix with young people of his own age; though as a mere scholar, he was a prodigy for his years—Greek and Latin had long, thanks to Mr. Carter, been familiar to him, and he already spoke French like a native, and had made great progress in Italian; requesting Mr. Harland's advice upon the subject, though he entreated he would henceforth suffer him to provide for all the dear boy's present wants. The estate, for which he was indebted to his generosity, would prove a very handsome future provision for him; the revenues should accumulate, as he wished him, before he died, to rank among the first men in Switzerland.

Mr. Harland had answered this kind letter by return of post, highly approving of

the baron's plan; but declaring that the ten thousand pounds the earl had placed at his disposal must be appropriated according to his late father's wishes; requesting the baron would join him and colonel Murray at Montpellier, when he had placed his *protégé* at Geneva; assuring him that both him and the colonel were too much gratified by his adoption of Edward, to interfere with any of his plans; like him, they had merely his interest at heart, and like him they wished him to receive the benefit which must arise from his removal to Geneva, since they understood the professors of that college were all men of talents and understanding.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIV.

EARLY in the spring, baron Villars joined the merchant and the colonel at Montpellier; he had spent a couple of months with his *son* at Geneva, and had now left him under the care of a Swiss clergyman, who received young gentlemen to board, who wished to attend the college, and to take lessons from other masters. Mr. Chaumette, he told the friends, was very capable of succeeding Mr. Carter, and his (the baron's) liberality had secured his attention to his boy, who appeared to have engrossed all the talents of the Delmont family. In short, the worthy Swiss was never tired of descanting upon the merits of this God-send, as he generally styled the son of his adoption, sincerely regretting he could not, without perhaps rousing

 his

his worthless father's attention, have made him the companion of his journey. In short, he was the constant theme of his discourse. Most fortunately his auditors were equally interested in his welfare.

From the baron they learnt, that lord Exmore, as by their courtesy he continued to be styled, was at Geneva with a private tutor. They boarded in a genteel family; but probably to keep him out of mischief, Mr. Batson never lost sight of his pupil, who, therefore, never associated, except at college, with any of his fellow students. Owing to his father's rank in life and official situation, many young men paid him great attention. Fortunately, as the worthy Swiss considered, this haughty sprig of aristocracy had not deigned to notice the son of a petty baron, therefore no intimacy was likely to take place between the brothers.

Though Edward was very much noticed by some of the first people, he had formed a friendship with a very fine young man,

man, his senior by at least a twelvemonth, who was also under the care of Mr. Chaumette. His name was Mirvan, and his mother, a widow, resided at Vevay, where she lived very retired, though she was very much respected. Her father was a dignified English clergyman, and report said the widow had settled in Switzerland, that her son might study at Geneva, and he was likely to do her and his family great credit.

The name of Mirvan being that of the Delmont family, the colonel asked a few questions respecting Edward's friend.

The baron knew little more than he had already told him. He was certainly no relation to lord Exmore; he had heard his grandfather's name, but it had escaped his memory; there were probably many other families of that name in England— "Yet, now you have mentioned the similarity of name, which I had not before remarked, do you know that I have once or twice fancied there was a sort of resem-

 blance

blance between Edward and his friend, though my boy is much the handsomest; and perhaps it was all fancy."

"Nay, baron," said the merchant, "we shall not be very uncharitable if we admit that lord Delmont may have more unacknowledged sons than your *protégé*—though as the mother is a respectable woman, I beg her pardon; when we visit Switzerland, we can form our own conclusions. Is Edward as fond of riding as when I saw him?"

"He is, and now attends the manege; but the riding-master was honest enough to tell me that he could not afford him much instruction, he had so bold a seat; and declared that he was, for his age, a very good judge of horses—of this he gave me proof positive.—Engelman (the master) had by my desire bought him a staid galloway, upon which he took his daily rides, till a young Englishman, whose father had suffered him to bring over a pair of saddle horses, having lost one from neglect,

and

and the other appearing to be likely to experience the same fate, offered to exchange him for Edward's pony, as he styled him, inquiring what my boy would give him to boot?—'Not a farthing,' he told the young fellow, since he would not sell his father's present; but he would give him his choice of any horse in Engelman's stables, and take the English horse in exchange. The young traveller selected a fine shewy beast, for which Edward paid forty pounds; thus the English horse became his property, which he has managed so well, assisted by his Swiss groom, that I never saw a finer creature, when I left Geneva; and proud enough he was of having convinced me that he had picked up some useful knowledge at Broomfields, to which he never alludes, though it is generally understood that he was brought up in England, and that his mother was an Englishwoman; but of course none of my friends appear inquisitive, and I bless God

I have

I have no relations to interfere with my plans."

Mr. Harland merely observed that he should, as in duty bound, make some further provision for him; and the colonel declared he merely had a life-interest in his late mother's fortune.

"Then my only fears are that he will be too rich," resumed the generous baron; "however, he will prove worthy of all we can do for him—his temper, principles, and intentions, are excellent."

Lord Delmont's manœuvres had been so clearly laid open to this excellent man, that he daily congratulated himself and his friends upon having rescued this amiable youth from his toils, who frequently wrote his adopted father, generally dwelling upon the praises of his friend Mirvan, to whose grandfather, Dr. Welford, he had been introduced, and had spent a week most pleasantly with the family at Vevay. Mrs. Mirvan lived in the most elegant style, and

and had received him as the friend of her son. Lord Exmore had removed with his governor to Lausanne, in consequence of the young nobleman having behaved impertinently to one of the professors. His English horse was generally admired, and Engelman had repurchased the one he had exchanged for it for ten pounds, it had suffered so much from over fatigue and want of care: generally concluding with hoping his father would soon return, and bring with him the Mr. Harland who had been so kind to him, doubtless for his (the baron's) sake, when he must have appeared a mere ploughboy.

Mr. Chaumette, who also corresponded with the baron, was lavish in praise of his pupil, whose mind seemed to expand with his acquirements, and whose heart seemed the seat of every virtue. Dr. Welford, the grandfather of Mr. Mirvan, could hardly believe he was of Swiss extraction, he had such an English countenance, which he

he (Chaumette) accounted for by his mother being of that nation.

The baron duly answered his *son's* letters, sending him various productions of the south of France, and promising to bring his friends home with him, who were impatient to be better acquainted with his beloved Edward, whose welfare and happiness was become his sole study.

CHAPTER XV.

WHILE time rolled on thus smoothly with the worthy trio at Montpellier, and was so well employed by their joint favourite at Geneva, lord Delmont, though he conceived that he had succeeded in duping Mr. Harland, and that he had disposed of all his accomplices, did not enjoy the comfort or happiness he had expected.

pected. Mr. Batson's letters from Geneva had at first been rather satisfactory. This gentleman was fully competent to the task he had undertaken, as his learning and abilities were very superior, and he was not of a temper to suffer his pupil to run riot; but vainly did he attempt to curb his natural disposition. To his fellow-students he was often rude, and to the professors frequently inattentive, and when reproved by any of them, generally insolent. Edward had incurred his dislike, because he was a general favourite, and often held up to him as an example—and what was more provoking, being a Swiss, he had no idea of bowing to the son of a British statesman; and his friend Mirvan appeared of too quiet a disposition to entertain any hopes of ever benefiting by the earl's patronage; vainly did he display his contempt of the rough Swiss, and the unassuming Englishman; they did not notice his puerile attempts to provoke them, which merely exposed him to the

severe

severe reprehensions of his tutor. Nor was his pride more tolerated by the professors, who merely respected their pupils in proportion to their acquirements; Mr. Batson was therefore obliged to represent to the earl, that if lord Exmore did not shew those gentlemen more respect, they must leave Geneva, as he had received many hints, threatening him with expulsion, for the studied insolence of his demeanour; nor had his fellow-students less reason to complain, as he was often pointedly rude to the natives, and barely civil to those English youths who did not minister to his reigning foibles. He (Batson) had particularly wished him to form an intimacy with a fine Swiss youth, whose frankness of disposition was visible in his every action, and who was so highly gifted by nature, that study was a mere amusement—he was the idol of a doating father, the pride of his tutor, and beloved by all who knew him; but to him lord Exmore had taken a rooted dislike, and was barely

restrained

restrained by his serious remonstrances from openly displaying it; indeed, his demeanour towards Mr. Melfort the Swiss, and his particular friend, a Mr. Mirvan, an English youth, who was studying under the same tutor, was often so indecorous, that he dreaded their noticing his covert insults.

Lord Delmont answered this letter express, giving Mr. Batson unlimited power over his refractory pupil; while to his son he merely wrote, that should he ever again fall into disgrace, by giving way to his vile temper, he would cut him off with a shilling, which might teach him to *know himself*—since divested of the power of rewarding the parasites whose flattery he so eagerly coveted, he would soon find himself completely overlooked for the next fool of fortune who would come up to their price. To the tutor his lordship was more diffuse, acknowledging that there was an inherent obstinacy about his son, which was likely to baffle all their endea-

vours

vours to work a reformation in his disposition, since threats seemed to increase his stubborn pride, and he was generally proof against persuasion; he had hoped much from sending him where his rank was not likely to procure him respect, and among youths of his own age, but he now found the experiment of no avail; however, abroad he should remain till of an age to go to the university, and then he must take his chance; concluding by desiring Mr. Batson would make some inquiries respecting the Mr. Mirvan he mentioned, requesting a particular description of his person, as he had reasons for wishing to know from what family he was descended, how long he had been at Geneva, &c.; and by way of qualifying his curiosity, he also expressed a wish to know more of the young Swiss, to whom he wished his son bore a greater resemblance; since Mr. Batson's letter had induced this wily statesman to fear that Mirvan was the son whose claims he had been so

anxious

anxious to annihilate; yet would he have borne that name, except he was under the protection of his uncle? and that was not likely—blaming himself for having displayed his curiosity to Batson. But then should this youth prove his heir, why might not he at once acknowledge him?

Never had he been more aware of the evils of suspense than while expecting the tutor's reply, which convinced him that this young Mirvan was no relative of his, since his mother was living, and had resided for some years in Switzerland, and the boy had been three years with Chaumette. Edward Melfort, the tutor wrote, was supposed to be the fruit of a private marriage; his mother was reported to be an Englishwoman, and he spoke the language like a native; declaring that any father might be proud of such a son, as he seemed a sort of universal genius, who had employed his every leisure moment in acquiring

quiring an insight into mechanics, botany, &c. &c.

Like his wayward son, lord Delmont felt jealous of the father of this very superior youth, regretting the caprice of fortune, which had been thus bountiful to a boy who could merely display them as the bailli or chief magistrate of some Swiss district, except he sought preferment in a foreign land; while his son, whose rank, fortune, and connexions, might enable him to become his successor, was hardly fitted to shine as governor of a Swiss canton: and when Mr. Batson wrote him that it had become necessary to remove lord Exmore from Geneva, in consequence of his having grossly insulted the professor of rhetoric, the earl was furious; he therefore ordered him to Lausanne, declaring that if any more complaints reached him, he would send him to a German university, where he should be subjected to the control of all the professors, restricted in his

expences,

expences, and, if necessary, confined to the precincts of his college, since he should never again disgrace his rank and family. To Mr. Batson he wrote to the same effect, desiring he would not suffer his pupil to stir without him; and should he again run riot, to proceed immediately with him to Leipsig, where he should even be confined to his room, if he could no otherwise curb his evil propensities.

Mr. Harland and his brother had agreed to return with the baron into Switzerland, as the colonel was much better in health and much happier in mind, since he knew his departed Emily's son would have so little reason to regret their joint imprudence. Every preparation had been made for their journey, when an express brought the colonel the melancholy intelligence of the death of his excellent uncle, sir Charles Freeman; who having wintered at Bath, was there seized with a paralytic stroke, which terminated his existence. The colonel's presence being therefore absolutely

necessary

necessary in England, Mr. Harland declared his intention of accompanying him thither; baron Villars therefore reluctantly returned alone to his beautiful abode, after making the friendly brothers promise that they would certainly visit him during the autumn; who both sent their joint favourite various expensive proofs of their regard, and then directed their steps homewards, looking forward with eager anticipation to their future meeting with their amiable *protégé*.

CHAPTER XVI.

The earl of Delmont was of course aware of where the two men he most dreaded and disliked had spent the winter; he also knew that baron Villars, the father of the prodigy who was so generally admired at Geneva, had joined them there; but it never occurred to him that this highly extolled youth could be his son: he had certainly heard the neglected peasant boy, whom he had doomed to oblivion, was a very clever lad, and had even seen a specimen of his skill in turning; but this youth was represented to be an excellent scholar, in addition to his natural genius; therefore he often wondered what had become of his eldest son, since he felt convinced that his fate and residence was as little known to the friends as it was to him; however, as he had so imprudently

withdrawn himself, he must now take the consequence; though should he ever apply to Chance, as being owner of Broomfields, he would make some provision for him. When he learnt the baronet's death, he supposed his heir would revisit England; the title would be extinct, but the large estates and personal property he knew would become the colonel's; and he certainly did not rejoice in his prosperity, since it might enable him to annoy him, should he ever obtain any knowledge of his injured son, as he would no longer be restrained from displaying his Quixotism. Then again he hoped he had so fully convinced Mr. Harland his son was no more, and that William Mansel was an impostor, that he could have nothing to dread. Yet while he remained in ignorance of the destiny of that injured youth, he could not feel satisfied. Griffiths and his wife were no longer to be feared, but Chance was become a *noli me tangere* in his flesh, and from whom he could not free

himself;

himself; therefore never was there a man less to be envied than this proud statesman, whose own wickedness had thus recoiled upon himself. In vain did he look to his younger son, to console him for the evil propensities of his elder brother; he was even worse tempered, and much more deficient in understanding. Had his daughters been of the other sex, they would have done him honour; now they would be transplanted into other families, and he should derive little honour from their talents. These unpleasant reflections induced him often to wish he could recall the past. Had he proved a kind husband to his first wife, and had he not by means of his wicked cousin led her into temptation, he might have been a much happier man. — Mr. Harland's immense fortune would have centred in his family, the son whom he had deprived of his birthright would have done him the greatest honour, and he should not have put it in the power of such venal wretches as

 Griffiths

Griffiths and his wife to torture if not to crush him, should they prove treacherous. He had certainly so speciously blended truth and falsehood in his communications to Mr. Harland, that he had misled his judgment and imposed upon his feelings; but he had not imposed upon himself, since he still dreaded the re-appearance of his son; nor could he place any confidence even in his newly-acquired agent. Thus were his private hours imbittered by vain and hopeless retrospection, as he found it impossible to banish ideas which were his torment.

He was duly apprized of the colonel and Mr. Harland's arrival in town, where they merely remained one night, as the former's presence was most anxiously expected in Hampshire. To have them followed thither the earl thought very useless, as they evidently did not know, and he hoped did not care, what had become of William Mansel. He must have convinced the merchant that he was the son of

of Mrs. Harland, and as such they would both be more inclined to shun than to seek him.

Thus hoping, fearing, and doubting, he continued, while the brothers hastened to Smallbury Priory, where they were detained two months, so much had the colonel to arrange. They then returned to town, to prove the will of the deceased, who had died much richer than his heir had expected, and who had left Mr. Harland a handsome legacy and other marks of his esteem.

Sir Charles's town house had been so long uninhabited, that the friends did not choose to take up their abode there, preferring a good hotel, as they proposed wintering abroad, and the colonel did not wish to engage any more servants at present.

Mr. Du Verney, the Swiss merchant, and former correspondent of both Mr. Harland and baron Villars, had given the former such pressing invitations to become his guest, that he persuaded the colonel to

accompany him to Roehamptom for one night, observing they should hear how the Arlington family went on; baron Villars having told them that Edward often mentioned the youthful Ellen, and was making a beautiful herbal of alpine and other plants, in hopes he should some time or other be able to send it to her; frequently telling his adopted father, that, except upon her account, he should never wish to revisit England—but he should like to convince her that he should ever remember her kind attentions to such a farmer's boy, as he should not now disgrace her were she to consider him as her friend; frequently wondering whether she would recognise the rustic she had once so kindly patronized; often dwelling upon Mr. Arlington's treatment of him; that he could have forgiven—he had perhaps a right to feel offended—but to oblige the gentle hearted girl to write him such a letter, that was abominable, since but for the few lines of explanation, he

he should have been quite miserable. Our friends had therefore resolved to visit Bristol ere they returned upon the Continent, that they might judge whether the youthful Ellen still felt the same interest in his fate.

Mr. Du Verney received the brothers most cordially; his wife was no less polite, and his family seemed truly pleasant and perfectly united. Dinner being over, and the ladies withdrawn, Mr. Harland asked after the Arlingtons.

"Mr. Arlington died early in the spring; he had long been such an invalid, that I think it was a happy release for him and his family; for he tyrannized over an excellent wife and two fine girls, who may now form good connexions, since no man of rank and fashion would have chosen him for a father-in-law."

"He died very rich, I suppose?" said the colonel.

"He has left more than three hundred thousand pounds behind him, and he has

 taken

taken care to prevent his money from being squandered by his heirs; he has left the widow four thousand a-year, and Fir Grove as a residence, till the youngest daughter becomes of age; then the house is to be sold, and she is to receive but three thousand per annum; not a shilling has he placed at her disposal; and should she make a second choice, she can only claim five hundred a-year. The whole of his property, equally saddled with the mother's jointure, he has divided beween his daughters; should they either of them die under age, the whole is to centre in the survivor; they are not to marry till of age, without the consent of their mother, your humble servant, and Mr. Felton, a West India Bristol merchant, as we are appointed joint guardians of the property, which is secured to each daughter for her sole and separate use, and is never to be at the control or disposal of any husband they may select; since should either die unmarried, or have no children, he has appointed

appointed the other her heir; and should there be children on both sides, they are to inherit their mother's property, share and share alike: therefore I dare say he thinks he has secured them from being the dupes of fortune-hunters."

"A most selfish will," observed Mr. Harland, "and which may prevent the poor girls from marrying so well as they might have done."

"He has truly tied all up—*to eggs of eggs of butterflies*," rejoined the colonel; "how truly absurd!"

"Most ridiculous!" said Mr. Du Verney; "though it perfectly displays his disposition. And he has merely allowed each daughter one thousand a-year till they become of age; and they will forfeit that, should they not continue to reside with their mother. I only wonder he did not regulate their number of servants, and the number of dishes they were to order. Many men, I agree, may not like the arrangement; still they will have such

 noble

noble incomes, and there will be such a provision for a future family, that I hope they will marry well, though they will not be able to redeem any mortgaged estates."

The merchant's avarice and want of feeling served them for conversation during the evening; and as the colonel had still many things to settle, they returned to town next morning, Mr. Du Verney promising to give them a letter to the widow, should they, as they intended, visit Bristol.

CHAPTER XVII.

HAVING put the finishing stroke to some part of his business, and left every thing in a fair train, the colonel agreed to accompany the merchant to Bristol, or rather to Clifton, as they did not choose to stop at any of the close inns in the former place; they drove to the York Hotel upon the hill; when having ordered dinner, they dispatched Mr. Harland's valet to Fir Grove, with Mr. Du Verney's letter, enclosed in a polite note of inquiry, in both their names. He returned in due time with a very cordial invitation from the widow, to take their breakfast with her and her daughters, the following morning, at ten o'clock, adding, "that if she did not hear from them again, she should expect them."

They were pleased she treated them thus familiarly, and decided that the colonel should seize some opportunity to let the fair Ellen know her former playfellow was well, should she still appear to feel any interest in his concerns, as at her age such juvenile friendships were seldom lasting.

Martin, who was equally anxious to procure his master some information, resolved to pay Miss Curtis a visit that evening. It was nearly dark ere he left the hotel, and having reached the well-known shop, he was surprised to see a different name upon the now, closed glass doors, and an appearance of greater opulence in the display of goods, and in the fitting up of the interior.—" Is she married?" he mentally exclaimed, " or has she disposed of her business?" There was a smart female behind the counter, but not his former friend. " She has left the place," thought he, proceeding towards a fruit shop, rather further on, where he asked to

be

be directed to Miss Curtis, a milliner, who he understood lived in that row.

"The person you inquire for, sir, did bear that name till within the last fortnight; she is now Mrs. Dixon, at your service; the name is upon the door just above. She has married a haberdasher, from London, and they have set out in great style. She was doing very well, and was very much patronized; time will shew whether she has improved her prospects. I wish her well, but one may live where two must starve."

Martin agreed to the wisdom of these remarks: and having made a small purchase, retraced his steps to Mrs. Dixon's, resolving not to appear acquainted with her change of name, though in his heart he was rather rejoiced at her having thus convinced him that his former visit had not led her to forming expectations which he should never have realized.

Having entered the shop, he inquired for Miss Curtis, of the female in charge. While he was speaking, the curtain over the

the glass door leading into the inner room was put aside, and he saw the well-remembered face of the bride, who was no less quicksighted; still she did not come forward as the valet had expected; and when her assistant, putting her head within the door, told her she was wanted, the answer was—"She was too unwell to see any one, therefore should be obliged to the gentleman if he would call again to-morrow, or when it suited his leisure."

"No," cried Martin, with well-affected resentment, "I shall never again darken these doors," retreating to give way to a hearty laugh; and while repeating the circumstance to the gentlemen, he greatly excited their mirth, hoping, as he concluded his tale, that Miss Ellen Arlington would no longer intrust her with any secrets, since he had no great opinion of her discretion before, and now her husband would of course be admitted into her confidence.

The colonel laughed at what he declared

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ed was mere pique; while the merchant observed, that tyrants, like Mr. Arlington, were sure to be dreaded and deceived, even by their children, since but for his absurd conduct towards Ellen and Edward, no confidence would have been placed in this milliner; fortunately they were such children when separated, that she could not make a lovetale of their innocent intimacy.

Martin declared, she had never thought them lovers, having even blamed the deceased for his folly in appearing to consider their having embraced as a high crime and misdemeanour. He made no doubt Mrs. Dixon was a worthy, well-meaning woman, but the less confidence her young mistress now granted her the better.

The gentlemen were quite of his opinion, Mr. Harland telling the colonel, when *tête-à-tête*—"I am delighted to find our joint confident Martin never presumes upon our familiar treatment, though his

family

family and education render him my equal, and as such I shall ever consider him."

The colonel had much to say in his praise, as he had rendered him perfectly independent since his uncle's death; but he was more anxious than ever to minister to his comforts, and more attentive to his wishes.

"A rare proof of real gratitude for past favours," said the merchant, who had also been very bountiful to this excellent young man.

At the appointed time the gentlemen proceeded to Fir Grove, while Martin, and his brother valet, walked to Westbury to see farmer Abinger, and to prepare him for a visit from the gentlemen.

Mrs. Arlington received them with polite cordiality, as the esteemed friends of one of her daughter's guardians, regretting that her dress, and the seclusion she thought it proper to adhere to, had prevented her from inviting any other gentlemen to meet them.

The

The colonel made a very suitable reply; the merchant declared he merely came to see her and her children, making some flattering remarks upon their persons. Miss Arlington might certainly now be considered as a very handsome, fine young woman; her natural talents had been highly cultivated; and had her temper and disposition bore less resemblance to her late father's, she would have appeared truly amiable. But the same sarcastic remarks often met the gentlemen's ears, and her countenance denoted how much she thought her consequence was increased by being the coheiress of the rich Mr. Arlington. She was very civil to the friends, as they were in her opinion men of fortune, and would rather do her honour should she boast of their acquaintance, or meet them in mixed society.

Ellen, the still lovely, artless Ellen, seemed, like their *protégé*, to be the peculiar favourite of nature. She was not so tall as her sister—indeed she had not

done

done growing; but there was a playful fascination in all she said or did, that delighted the approving friends, whom she declared herself most happy to see, eagerly inquiring what part of the Continent they had visited, and whether they now meant to settle in England; if so, she hoped it would be in their neighbourhood.

She was proceeding, when Miss Arlington hoped their visitors would excuse Ellen's loquacity, who was so fond of hearing her own voice, she seldom waited for any answer to the numerous questions she chose to ask.

The colonel declared himself much flattered by the anxiety Miss Ellen Arlington displayed to retain him in her vicinity; he only wished that his health would admit of his wintering in England—"But, like your Indian plant, my sweet friend," turning to Ellen, "I require to be heated as an exotic. Have you still preserved that beautiful specimen of the productions of Hindostan?"

Eagerly

Eagerly seizing the opportunity thus afforded her, Ellen asked him to come and see it; she had been most fortunate in saving it, as many similar had perished at Badminton.

Mrs. Arlington requested the walk might be delayed till after breakfast, which was served in a style suitable to the widow of a rich man.

Mr. Harland, who saw much to admire in this truly unaffected, but excellent woman, had eagerly engaged her in an interesting conversation. Her eldest daughter, piqued at not having been more particularly noticed by their guests, declined accompanying her sister and the colonel in their proposed walk, sitting down to a drawing-table in the room; and certainly she could not have devised a more agreeable method of obliging them; still the colonel, young as his companion was, hardly knew how to mention Edward, as he did not desire the sweet girl to suppose he wished her to bestow her affections

upon

upon him; and he might, if she still regarded him with preference, wound her feelings by seeming to guess them; but with the frankness inherent to her nature, no sooner were they out of hearing, than she anxiously inquired for her playfellow, declaring that she must ever feel interested in his welfare, adding—"But for my sister, colonel, I would ask your permission to mention him to my dear mother; but Anne speaks of him with such contempt, that I dread her supposing I have ever heard any thing respecting him."

"Suffer her to do so, my dear young friend, since I cannot allow you at present even to inform your excellent mother that he is every day rendering himself more worthy of your friendship; but it is of such importance to his future welfare, that his existence as William Mansel should remain unknown, that I must still swear you to secrecy. He is very well, very much improved, and as grateful as ever for past favours. You are now, as formerly,

merly, the spur to his diligence. He still gardens and botanizes; and sooner or later you will have proof that he daily, nay, hourly, reverts to your past kindness towards him. But remember our former compact; it must still remain in full force."

"Never, without your full permission, colonel, shall I ever again even allude to the subject, as I am sure you will permit me to relate all I know to my mother, the moment you think I can do it with safety to the poor youth," relating the paragraph she had read in the papers during her father's lifetime, and the hopes she had entertained of its leading to a further discovery of her former friend's connexions.

The colonel agreed her expectations were very natural, adding—"I have had such proof of your discretion, that I would enter into many more details, were I not equally sworn to secrecy, so you must be contented with my assurances that your former

former friend is well born, and well connected, and will be as amply provided for as you have been by your late father; so let us return to the house," which, having seen and admired the flourishing exotic, they soon did.

Mr. Harland was telling the widow that his friend and him proposed wintering either in Italy or the south of France; they were not absolutely decided.

Ellen declared she envied them, as she should much enjoy visiting the Continent.

Miss Arlington would have no objection she said to visit Paris in the summer; but for the winter, she gave the preference to London.

"I shall certainly not leave England at present," said the widow; "indeed were I so inclined, I much doubt whether Mr. Felton would much approve of my making you girls the companions of my journey. I had intended to winter at Fir Grove, but Mr. Du Verney so strongly recommends my visiting London, where,

as

as he justly observes, my daughter may continue to receive lessons from the first masters, that I believe I shall desire he would secure me a house, as I can live as retired there as here."

"Most assuredly," said Mr. Harland, "and you will enjoy the society of our friend's wife and daughters, who seem most pleasant women."

Miss Arlington made no doubt of their being able to extend their acquaintance as soon as their mother could open her house—"Seeming," remarked the colonel to his friend as they returned home, "to suppose she had only to be seen to be admired, and as if she already looked down with disdain upon her mother, and considered her sister as a mere baby, hardly out of leading-strings."

These thoughts led him to observe—"That, under the guidance of Mrs. Arlington, he felt convinced they would meet with due notice and proper respect;" adding,

ing, "and as you have not yet written to Mr. Du Verney respecting a house, my dear madam, I should consider myself greatly your debtor, if you would take up your abode in the one I have inherited from my late uncle. I will take care to have it properly aired for your reception; and only consider what a saving it will prove to me, to have it occupied by your family, instead of leaving its present inhabitants, an old male and female servant, in charge. It is situated in Saville-row; and I am sure Mr. Du Verney will second my proposal out of regard to my pocket."

Mr. Harland warmly recommended Mrs. Arlington to close with the offer; and thus, half jest half earnest, it was finally settled that this excellent woman should take possession of this said dwelling as soon as the gentlemen left England; Miss Arlington declaring she had a dislike to all ready-furnished abodes, and

Ellen

Ellen feeling delighted at thus strengthening the intimacy between the colonel and her mother. The gentlemen having paid a long visit, at last reluctantly took their leave, promising to see the ladies frequently during their stay at Clifton; and both agreeing when they drove from the door, that Mrs. Arlington and Ellen were the exact counterparts of each other, and greatly improved upon acquaintance; while Miss Arlington bid fair to become as insolent and as odious as her late father, and probably to purchase a coronet, by way of looking down with still more pride upon her excellent mother and more amiable sister.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Farmer Abinger was most happy to see his former lodgers, regretting his apartments were let to a bachelor invalid, since only to have received them for a week would have gratified him. Mr. Chance was a very good landlord, he told them, and had recommended his present lodger —a placeman like himself. As to Griffiths and his family, no one could even guess where they were gone; David had never returned, nor had William Mansel ever been heard of, except, as Mr. Chance had told him, he had been lost in his passage to some foreign place. That gentleman had made many inquiries respecting him, as thinking the Griffithses might have joined him.

As these remarks merely tended to convince

vince the friends that the earl was still very anxious to discover his eldest son, and had probably placed the present lodger as a sort of spy upon their words and actions, they made a very short stay, and asked no questions, or any further explanation of Mr. Chance's surmises; and as Martin alone attended them at dinner, he confirmed all their suspicions. The new lodger had made fifty excuses to speak to the farmer while he and Winton were there; he was a bungler, and had missed his aim, as he (Martin) had declared he had almost forgotten the Griffithses; and when William Mansel was mentioned, made no doubt of his having been lost: the brothers were therefore amused at the precautionary measures the statesman still had recourse to, the colonel thinking he displayed great want of policy in employing so many agents.

"Query whether any one are really in his secrets, Chance excepted. However, it proves that his suspicions have never extended

tended to Switzerland, though I think he fears I have not been completely his dupe. However, he is sufficiently punished in having removed our dear Edward to make room for the present lord Exmore. I hardly wish him to be more mortified."

The colonel declared he had now forgiven him; since, much as he had to accuse him of, he could not in some respects throw the first stone; and he felt assured, that high as the earl continued to rank in the esteem of the ministerial party, his private hours were no longer devoted to either pleasure or comfort, but probably to useless regret and bitter repentance.

"I can believe he now truly leads a life of *splendid misery*," was the reply; "perhaps upon his deathbed he may endeavour to make his peace with Heaven; at present he is only plunging deeper into sin. I think we could pen as severe an epitaph upon him as the one written upon the infamous Charteris. Still, like you,

I forgive

I forgive him, as his son has not fallen a victim to his villany."

During the evening, the colonel agreed to dispatch Martin to London, to have his late uncle's house prepared for his and Mr. Harland's reception, as they wished Mrs. Arlington should find herself comfortable. Martin therefore received a *carte blanche* respecting alterations and additions to the furniture; and as the old couple who had been long left in charge were to continue to inhabit some rooms in the offices, they assisted the valet to the best of their endeavours; and a house-maid and cook being engaged, and the house thoroughly aired, our brothers left Bristol for London, having more than once visited the widow, who had agreed to take possession of the handsome abode offered her, within the week after the gentlemen's departure for the Continent.

Mr. Du Verney dined with them on the day of their arrival, and declared himself much obliged by the colonel's polite-

ness towards the widow and his wards, adding — "I understand Miss Arlington looks forward with great anxiety to her emancipation from control, as she hopes to form an alliance with nobility, which will enable her to look down upon the commercial world; this silly notion was implanted in her mind by her late father, who, had he lived, would never have suffered his girls to marry except to titled men."

The colonel and Mr. Harland agreed that a coronet was often thought to ensure happiness, and Miss Arlington appeared to possess exactly the sort of mistaken pride to induce her to covet the shewy bauble, no matter who wore it.

They had agreed to dine with their guest the following day, to meet several brother merchants, with whom Mr. Harland had also had dealings, and who were anxious to renew their acquaintance with him. Never had the colonel found himself in a more pleasant party; the gentlemen

men present had every claim to his respect; they were all, like his brother Harland, honourable in their dealings—and had all, like him, been fortunate in their speculations.

During the evening, their host mentioned with regret the colonel and Mr. Harland's approaching departure, which led to inquiries as to whither they meant to bend their course, &c. &c.—"Had you liked a sea voyage, gentlemen," said Mr. Chester, an old acquaintance of Mr. Harland, "I would have offered you accommodations in a very fine vessel, bound to Smyrna, which should have landed you at any port in the Mediterranean. She will touch at Leghorn; and as the equinoctial gales are over, I will ensure your safety."

The brothers declared themselves much obliged; and after a short discussion, promised to let Mr. Chester know the next day whether they determined to accept his offer, as it required consideration, and

they could not immediately decide between France and Italy.

When they returned home, they debated the matter: the colonel thought a sea voyage would do him good; they must defer visiting Switzerland till the spring; baron Villars would then give them the meeting on the other side of the Alps, and by that time surely earl Delmont would cease to watch their movements.—"I really think Mr. Chester was prompted to make the proposal by our better angel. The earl cannot, should we go by sea to Leghorn, guess where we shall land; and by refraining from yet visiting the child of our adoption, we must lull all his suspicions; and I feel convinced we shall defeat his schemes for discovering our route, should we accept of Chester's offer. Poor man! what trouble and expence has his shameful treatment of my beloved nephew exposed him to! he has found to his cost that his crooked paths have not proved those of peace."

Suffice

Suffice it to say, that it was finally settled the friends should join the ship at Plymouth, and preparations were made in consequence. Mr. Du Verney was to receive the widow in Saville-row, for whom the colonel left a most polite letter, promising his favourite Ellen to bring her some Alpine plants, &c.

The day before that fixed for their departure for Plymouth, as the brothers were crossing the Park, arm-in-arm, to pay a farewell visit to a friend of the colonel in Great George-street, they met face to face, while crossing the parade, the earl of Delmont and another nobleman, who were in such earnest discourse, the friends were within three paces of him before he recognised them; his lordship started, and merely bowing, walked forward—when almost instantly recovering his usual self-possession, the minister turned round, and hastily overtaking his former relative, exclaimed, tapping him on the shoulder—

 "Do

"Do you know I did not at the first moment recollect you, Mr. Harland—the multiplicity of business with which I am overwhelmed must plead my excuse."

The colonel, who had instantly recollected his former rival, since time had been much more lenient to the peer than to the soldier, dropping his friend's arm, walked forward, without looking round him, while the merchant took the ungloved hand which appeared so cordially extended towards him, assuring the courteous noble there needed no apologies.

The usual compliments having been offered and returned, the earl expressed his surprise at meeting Mr. Harland in town, as few people, except business of some nature or other required their presence, chose this season for visiting London.

Mr. Harland agreed; since business had brought him and colonel Murray thither; but they were already on the wing, as they should set out on the morrow for

Plymouth,

Plymouth, where they meant to embark for either Spain or Italy, they had hardly decided which.

"Then let me recommend the latter; but can I afford you any assistance, either as to passports or introductory letters? I did not at all recollect colonel Murray—he looks much older than he really is; he has lately come into sir Charles Freeman's property—does he mean to claim the title?"

"I may venture to reply in the negative, my lord; my friend has thoroughly renounced the vanities of this world, since his state of health has long taught him to fix his hopes on the next."

The earl made no reply to this statement, though had Mr. Harland regarded him, his countenance would have led him to suppose his conscience was merely lulled, not stifled; hastily recovering his spirits, he exclaimed—"Bad health makes cowards of us all; but I wish you could make it convenient to dine in Piccadilly to-

 day—

day—I entertain a few literary friends; I am sure you would be gratified."

"I make no doubt; but a preengagement prevents my accepting your invitation; so allow me to wish you a good morning."

"A pleasant voyage, my good friend; and only bear in mind that you will ever find me ready and willing to exert my interest in any way likely to promote your wishes." The merchant bowed and was retiring, when the minister stopped him.—"Do you know I am half inclined to believe my quondam valet and his precious paramour have vanished from the face of the earth, since I cannot at all even guess whither they are gone; fear seems to have given them wings, as they do not appear to have stopped in Europe."

"Since they must be aware that hanging would be too mild a punishment for them, were they to meet with their deserts," replied Mr. Harland, "their terror seems very easily accounted for; wherever

ever they are, they must drag on a life of misery in a state of exile. By the way, I have not seen your lordship since, by mere chance, we, or rather, colonel Murray's secretary, stumbled upon the wretched Welchwoman whom Mrs. Harland had duped into becoming the partner of her flight, and then left to perish at Ghent; she died the day after we were appealed to in her behalf, and was buried at our expence. If she was to believed, the precious pair married abroad; whither they went she could not inform us, or I should have transmitted the intelligence to your lordship; indeed, the circumstance had almost escaped my memory till you reverted to the wretched beings."

The earl was all attention, bestowed many execrations upon the plotting pair, and did not seem much at his ease till Mr. Harland treated the circumstance so lightly; but not suffering him to depart till he had vowed vengeance against these unfeeling brutes, who had doubtless his son's

son's and the late Mr. Harland's death to answer for; their own son appeared to have paid the penalty of their crimes—but sooner or latter they would meet with their punishment even in this world.

The merchant perfectly agreed with his lordship; and having rejoined the colonel, who had kept them in view, he repeated what had passed between them, hoping he had rather unhinged his lordship, whose servile civility proved how much he dreaded Mr. Harland still entertaining any suspicions derogatory to his honour, and how anxious he was to render him his friend, or at least to prevent his becoming his enemy.

The next morning, the brothers set out for Plymouth, and in due time embarked with a fair wind on board the William and Mary, for Leghorn.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIX.

For some time after his arrival at Lausanne, lord Exmore behaved very well; the serious threats the earl had held out, had succeeded in rendering him very amenable to control, and very attentive to his studies; and as he was a fine youth, in point of appearance, and could, when he pleased, be very polite, he was much noticed by the Swiss gentry, in consequence of his father's rank and situation, and treated with a respect and civility hardly due to his age, by the young English resident at Lausanne; Mr. Batson was therefore able to send the earl very flattering accounts of his successor, who seemed very anxious to make up for his former deficiencies, and really appeared likely to do him honour.

The

The earl was much gratified; and by way of encouraging the youth, now in his fifteenth year, to persevere, he desired the tutor to give a ball and supper on the twelfth of August, in honour of his heir's royal sponsor, to which all the English, of either sex, resident in or near Lausanne or Geneva, were to be invited, and all the Swiss whose rank were those of gentlemen; requesting two Swiss senators, to whom he had recommended his son, and two English gentlemen, then resident in Switzerland, to act as stewards, and to assist the youthful peer in doing the honours of his entertainment. The preparations were upon a scale of magnificence suitable to his lordship's rank and official capacity, as full time was allowed the gentlemen who were to preside; therefore such an entertainment appeared likely to render the young traveller very popular; at all events it greatly increased his pride, as the first winter he resided abroad, he had merely subscribed, with the other English,

English, towards the ball and supper which was then annually given to the natives; now he was to be the sole hero of a superb fete, which was to be graced by all the first families in the vicinity, and by all the English within a certain distance. Baron Villars and his son were of course invited, as was Mr. Mirvan and his mother. She politely declined appearing, but suffered her son to join baron Villars and his friend upon the festive occasion.

As the gentlemen who had so kindly agreed to act as stewards received the company, the young peer's deficiencies in politeness and etiquette were less remarked. He opened the ball with the daughter of one of the first Swiss nobles; and every thing went on very pleasantly till the dancing recommenced after supper, at which lord Exmore had made rather free; and as he fancied himself the person of most consequence present, he again approached his first partner, requesting they might once more lead the way. She politely

litely informed him she was engaged to Mr. De Melfort for the next quadrille. My lord, who did not shine in those dances, declared he would have a country-dance—surely he was entitled to regulate at his own party.

"Undoubtedly, my lord," exclaimed the *protégé* of baron Villars; "but I shall not suffer you to deprive me of this lady's hand."

"Do you know who I am, sir, and how very superior my rank is even to the baron your father's?"

"Oh, I am very ready to acknowledge your boasted superiority, my lord, in every thing but politeness."

"You are an insolent Swiss scoundrel!" was the retort courteous, aiming a blow at our hero, who instantly laid him at his feet.

The quarrel had been so sudden, that few people were aware of what had occurred, till the extension of his lordship required an explanation, which was very calmly given

given by Edward, whom every one who had overheard what passed declared had treated the insolent youth very properly.

The stewards were shocked at the hero of the fete having thus disgraced himself.

Mr. Batson, while raising his senseless pupil, assured Edward he should apologize for his gross speeches and insolent assault.

"I was quite as much to blame, sir, to suffer passion to induce me to disturb the harmony of the company. His lordship's rude language I could have laughed at, but the blow——"

"Was very properly resented," said most of the English and all the Swiss.

Meanwhile the young savage, who had merely been slightly stunned, recovered his senses, and was required by the stewards to make proper excuses to the company, which he positively refused, declaring he had been very ill treated, and displaying the obstinacy and brutality of his disposition in such gross language, that

the

the company immediately retired, leaving him to vent his rage in idle threats respecting his father's power, and to express his regret at so much money having been wasted upon such an ungrateful set.

Mr. Batson ordered him to bed, shocked at his having thus exposed himself the third time, and thus publicly disgraced his noble descent. In vain did the cowardly being, who had certainly inherited his father's pusillanimity, without the specious gloss he could spread over his deficiencies, offer the next morning to make even the most abject excuses; the moment was gone by, as his tutor justly told him, and he must make his absurd conduct known to the earl, who would, were he inclined to favour him, learn it from the stewards; he could therefore only promise not to make bad worse; still he (Mr. Batson) dared not disguise the truth: and as the tutor had foreseen and expected, the stewards had written by the same post to the minister, whose feelings upon receipt

ceipt of their letters may be conceived, but cannot be described. Had he been near his son, his years would hardly have screened him from violent manual chastisement; as it was, he wrote Mr. Batson orders to proceed with him immediately to Leyden, the college at Leipsig not being so strict, and there he was to be subjected to the most severe restrictions, merely requiring the tutor to prevent his eloping, or by any other means escaping the punishment due to his insolence and open violation of decency, doubling that gentleman's allowance at the expence of his almost proscribed son, to whose penitent letter he did not pay the least attention, aware that it was the mere result of fear, the most abject of all passions; nor did he suffer the countess to remain in ignorance of her son's recent folly, declaring, "that this wretched boy, who bid fair to disgrace them both, was solely indebted to her mistaken indulgence for his obstinacy and stubborn temper.—What

had

had she now to say in his defence for thus wantonly insulting the son of a senator of Berne, who Mr. Batson had recommended to his pupil as an example?" adding, with increasing bitterness—"The father of this spirited youth, baron Villars, is the friend of Mr. Harland and colonel Murray, to whom, no doubt, he will represent lord Exmore's conduct in a very favourable light."

The countess was roused in her turn, and now declared that her dear children were objects of abhorrence to their father, who, she made no doubt, would soon bring forward some impostor as their elder brother, to supersede their claims. George was a mere child, and had acted like any boy of his age when provoked; had he been let alone, he would have given this Swiss boy a good drubbing, and there the business would have ended.

The earl retorted most bitterly, inquiring whether she supposed the viscount had been educated in a bear-garden? assuring

her that he sincerely lamented the death of his elder son, but advising her never again to give into the failings of hers, since the language she had addressed to him very much resembled lord Exmore's to Mr. Melfort. His regard for his children should ever be regulated by their respective merit; and if she thought the viscount was taking the means to render himself either beloved or respected, he was sorry for her weakness, and should ever regret he bore so much more resemblance to her than to himself, since he was now convinced he would never do honour to the Delmont family.

The countess, with impotent rage, now recapitulated all the advantages the earl had derived from his marriage, blaming herself for having formed a connexion which had been so inimical to her happiness, reproaching him with having rendered his first wife desperate, and with having, possibly in conjunction with his worthless cousin, merely removed his eldest son,

till

till it might suit him to again bring him forward.

The last truism bore so heavy upon his feelings, that it required all his acquired command of temper to enable him to avoid laying violent hands upon her; but a moment's serious reflection induced him to lament her misfortunes in strains of such bitter irony, that the weak woman, thrown totally off her guard, gave way to such a torrent of reproaches, the earl threatened to declare her insane, and have her confined in consequence, protesting that if she ever again had recourse to such unbecoming language, he would convince her that he was not to be so offended with impunity.

Convinced, like her more stubborn son, that she had gone too far, and had completely roused the earl's malignant passions, she became as meanly abject as she had been weakly furious, and thus excited the contempt of her husband without obtaining his forgiveness, as he peremptorily

rily forbid her corresponding with her exiled son; and declared, that should she venture to give way to her vile disposition again, he would send his daughters into the North, and she should never again see her darling youngest pet till he became of age—therefore, considering his weak constitution, she might consider their again meeting as very problematical.

Thus did this weak woman render more galling the heavy chains she had imposed upon herself; and the guilty earl (as far as respected his treatment of his first wife and elder son) thus met with part of his punishment, from the very woman to secure whose hand and fortune he had entered into the nefarious league with Mrs. Harland, the success of which was likely to render him much more miserable than its failure could have done.

He had scarcely recovered his usual unenviable state of mind, when he met Mr. Harland and the colonel, and again were all his angry passions roused at the im-

prudence of his cousin and former valet, in having left the wretched Gwynne to starve. Fortunately she had been unable to give the friends any information respecting the route the new-married couple had taken, and of William Mansel she knew no more than he now did. Mr. Harland was certainly equally ignorant, and appeared to suppose he was no more; still he could not, nor never should feel satisfied till he had discovered what had become of this youth. Had Mrs. Harland told him of his departure from Westbury, that would long since have been ascertained. Now he never might learn whither he had bent his steps, little supposing, notwithstanding his almost intuitive sagacity, that the very polite letter he had addressed to Mr. De Melfort to excuse his son's behaviour, had been received by the very person whose retreat he was so anxious to discover; and had he witnessed baron Villars's triumph upon this occasion, he would not have been very much

much flattered; but his condescension had rendered him almost as popular at Lausanne as he still was in England; and many people regretted so excellent, so polite a man should be the father of so odious a youth, who fancied rank and money enabled him to give free scope to his evil propensities.

CHAPTER XX.

COLONEL Murray and Mr. Harland had a very pleasant voyage till they came nearly in sight of their destined port, Leghorn, when a smart breeze sprung up, which soon became so strong a gale, that the captain was unable to land them according to promise, and was obliged, as the next best, to put into Cagliari, in the island of Sardinia, from whence vessels were daily sailing for Naples, and where he could repair the damage his ship had sustained.

The friends were rather pleased at thus having an opportunity of visiting this fruitful island, and were scarcely settled at an inn or hotel of the captain's recommendation, ere they were visited by the British consul, who having heard of their arrival, came to pay them the *compliments d'usage,* and to request the favour of their company to dinner the next day.

Mr. White was a pleasant well-informed man, and readily accepted the new-comers' invitation to supper, during which he was very communicative, acknowledging that few English made any stay in Sardinia. At present there were not more than three families in the island: Mr. and Mrs. Burton, the last comers, were by far the most pleasant; the lady appeared to have mixed in good society, and was a great addition to their parties, as she was a very good musician, and spoke French and Italian with great fluency; Mr. Burton seemed inclined to speculate in some of the produce of the island, but he appeared

peared a mere trader when compared to his wife, who was generally noticed and admired.

As the gentlemen had never before heard the name of Burton, and felt very little anxiety to see this paragon, they would have declined the consul's invitation, had they not feared to mortify a countryman, who though he enjoyed a nominal honourable situation, derived very little profit from its emoluments.

Having breakfasted at rather a late hour the following morning, the friends sallied forth to visit what was most worthy notice in the town; the colonel taking Martin's arm, who was now merely considered as his secretary, another valet having been engaged ere they left England; indeed both gentlemen were partial to his society, and often derived great amusement from his remarks. Having seen the various objects worthy notice within the town, the guide whom they had engaged led the way to the mall or walk, frequented by the

the natives, which they agreed was adapted to the climate, and not unpleasant even at that season of the year. A gentleman, whose costume led them to suppose him a native of the island, upon whose arm a lady was leaning, whose dress was more anglicised, were sauntering before them, engaged in earnest conversation. Not choosing to pass them, which might be deemed rude, the friends and Martin continued in the rear, frequently stopping to address their guide, when having reached the extremity of the walk, the pair whom they were following turned round, and thus met them almost face to face, when the lady, clinging to her companion's arm, made a sudden stop, and ere she could, as she endeavoured, pull down her veil, Martin, who was more quick-sighted than the brothers, exclaimed—"Mrs. Harland!" who instantly fainted upon being thus recognised, and would have fallen all her length, her companion not being either very young or very agile, if Martin had not

not sprung forward and caught her in his arms; dispatching the guide for some water, and requesting the Sardinian gentleman would search the lady's pockets for a smelling-bottle.

"Are you acquainted with Mrs. Burton?" asked the old noble, for such he was.

"I was so formerly, sir," replied the secretary; "by her change of name, I presume she has married again," hoping to prevent any farther exposure of her character.

The invalid slowly revived, pressing the arm that supported her, and endeavouring to excite Martin's pity by looks and signs; who, though he felt a sentiment bordering on hatred for the wretched woman, merely hoped she was better, assuring her she was the last person he had expected to meet in Sardinia.

Her late companion now pressed forward with many anxious inquiries—should he go for a carriage, or would she be able to walk home? She believed she must

trouble him to procure her a conveyance; she would wait his return upon a bench she pointed out.

The gallant was thus caught in his own snare, and was obliged to leave his newly acquired friend to the care of her older acquaintance, towards whom he seemed any thing but cordially inclined.

Neither the colonel nor Mr. Harland would have so soon recognised her, had not Martin been with them, as they had not seen her in Wales; and the momentary glance the former had had of her at Westbury, would merely have brought her to his recollection, if Griffiths had not so immediately have confirmed his suspicions by mentioning her name. The guide had not returned with the water, or probably her late companion would have dispatched him instead of going himself.

Taking advantage of her being thus left alone with the brothers and Martin, this artful female gave way to a violent gush of tears,

tears, and then deprecated their anger in terms most likely to soften their hearts.

The indignant colonel was the first to exclaim—"The contempt I now and ever did feel for you, Mrs. Harland, or whatever your name is, effectually shields you from my resentment. I should feel degraded by acknowledging I had ever been upon familiar terms with a woman, whose whole life has been a scene of artifice and deception, and who has probably, at last, been caught in the toils of him whose agent she has so long been."

Mr. Harland spoke to the same effect, in even more pointed terms; and then, as the guide came up with the water, the brothers walked back with the man, telling Martin he would find them at their hotel.

Mrs. Harland, or rather Mrs. Griffiths, had again recourse to tears, acknowledging that appearances were certainly against her, inquiring of Martin, upon whom she continued to lean, in a most insinuating

 tone,

tone, what had brought the gentlemen to Cagliari?

Martin briefly informed her, adding—"You perceive you have nothing to fear from the circumstance."

"Do you call it nothing, Mr. Martin, to be exposed to such gross insults, which my unfortunate situation prevents me from resenting? But I agree I deserve your friends' contempt. I need not tell you when and where Mr. Harland died; imperative necessity obliged me to marry again almost immediately, since I was left destitute."

"Why surely your *solicitor* would not have suffered you to want? But I have no right to ask you any questions—indeed I should be very little the wiser by so doing, since I have heard why, and with whom you left England; and I know where you married Mr. *Griffiths*, alias *Burton*. I suppose you recollect you left poor dame Gwynne at Ghent, where I received her last sigh, and she was buried at colonel

Murray

Murray and Mr. Harland's expence. She told me you were going to settle in some island, and here you are.'

His companion seemed lost in amazement during this brief recapitulation of her proceedings, but did not attempt to contradict him; and though she did not absolutely acknowledge having secreted earl Delmont's son, she agreed that Griffiths and she had been obliged to fly their country, in consequence of the plan they had laid to induce the earl to believe that William Mansel was his heir. The forgery she was not so willing to admit, but did not absolutely deny having been very imprudent. In short, she played her part so well, that Martin felt assured she had been bribed very high thus to criminate herself to exonerate the earl, though he had doubtless endeavoured to guard against the very meeting which had thus unexpectedly taken place; but her instructions had doubtless been positive; and galling as it must be to her feelings, she dared not

 contradict

contradict the earl's assertions. She excused herself for having abandoned Gwynne, by declaring she had amply provided for all her wants, and had been much shocked when they sent for her to learn she was no more.

Martin was not sorry when her Sardinian friend appeared with a carriage, into which he handed the apparent invalid, who took a very polite leave of our secretary; though, had she dared, she would have treated him with even more contumely than the friends had displayed towards her.

The gentlemen had been anxiously expecting his return, and agreed that the wretched being was almost sufficiently punished, since to secure the protection of her patron, she had been obliged to confess herself deserving of the gallows; and after all the pains and expence which had been incurred, to have her retreat thus unexpectedly discovered, must keep her in a constant state of dread, if it did not induce

her

her to move her quarters. This rencontre however induced the gentlemen to hasten their departure, as Martin in particular dreaded their being exposed to the malice such wretches as Griffiths and his wife must feel towards them.

A felucca was to sail for Naples the next morning, in which Martin engaged their passage; and they were not surprised when they arrived at the consul's, to hear him regret that a sudden indisposition had prevented Mrs. Burton from joining the party. Her husband, they understood, was from home; and as they made no remarks, nor asked any questions, no one present supposed they were acquainted with this English couple.

Martin, who had not been idle, had picked up from their landlord, that the English lady who had fainted in the mall, was supposed to be a great favourite of the nobleman her companion; and if her husband was satisfied, whom did it concern? acknowledging that report made

them

them out to be a most wretched couple; therefore the signora was the less to be blamed; and as the friends now considered her and her concerns beneath their notice, they resolved, upon second thoughts, never to mention, except to baron Villars, the having stumbled upon the miserable couple, as at first Mr. Harland had decided to write to the earl when he had met *cousin Jane*; but as this, though it might mortify the great man, would also put him again upon the alert, they finally decided to suffer matters to take their course, wondering whether Mrs. Griffiths would think it necessary to address him upon the subject.

"If she is tired of Sardinia, she will seize the opportunity to seek another retreat," remarked the colonel; "if not, she will suffer his lordship to remain in ignorance of our having met. How sincerely do I rejoice that we never attempted to force earl Delmont to acknowledge his son! since, with the will and power he possesses,

sesses, depend upon it he would soon have been effectually removed, if he had not been doomed to pay obedience to his self-created mother, and her mercenary second husband."

"It was indeed most fortunate that we were guided by your late worthy uncle's advice; he was better acquainted with the earl's character than we ever shall be, were we even upon intimate terms with him; yet I can suppose there are times and seasons when his lordship wishes he could recall the *ploughboy*, who would have done him much more honour."

"Thank God he has hitherto been doomed to blush pretty often for his heir! we could not wish him to be more punished."

Such was the reasoning of the brothers, who, at the appointed time, sailed for Naples, where they arrived in very good health and spirits; and having engaged a suit of good rooms, as money was not an object to them, they were soon comfortably settled, and immediately wrote baron

Villars

Villars an account of their recent adventures, assuring him that they hoped to spend the ensuing summer at the castle of Berne Berg, requesting to hear from him very frequently *ad interim*, as they were very much interested for their joint *protégé*, and wished to know how lord Exmore behaved at Lausanne, not having heard of his departure from thence.

CHAPTER XXI.

Mrs. Griffiths, for such she really was, felt much relieved when she learned the brothers had sailed for Naples; her present husband had rendered himself more the object of her dislike than her first had ever been, as he was vulgarly presuming, very obstinate, and much wished to break the spirit she continually evinced when provoked. The large bribes he had received,

ceived, added to the dread he entertained of being implicated in the punishment of his wretched partner, had Mr. Harland asserted his nephew's claims, had rendered him very subservient to the earl's plans, who thought money no object to secure their joint secrecy; but he had ere this sorely repented having sworn never to return to England, as he neither spoke French nor Italian with any fluency, and found himself out of his element when introduced into good society. He had hoped to increase his fortune by speculating in some of the productions of Sardinia, but as yet he had not been able to arrange his plans; but during the excursion he was taking, when the friends landed in Sardinia, he met with an Italian Jew, who drew so fascinating a picture of Smyrna, where he was settled, and pointed out such sure means of making a large fortune, that Griffiths was dazzled into a belief that he should become a nabob in a very few years, when, under another name, he might re-

turn

turn to England, and live as well as his patron.

Now, but for this said patron, he could have left his wife to shift for herself in Sardinia; but as she would of course make his defection known to the earl, he returned with the Jew, who spoke very good English, to Cagliari, where she afforded him an excellent excuse for hastening their departure, by telling him whom she had seen during his absence; and as her Sardinian lover had grown very cool and slack in his attentions, she agreed to proceed to Smyrna, as she was quite as anxious to increase their fortune; and like her husband had formed many plans for the future, none of which would have met the approbation of lord Delmont, to whom they both wrote, under cover, to their successor in his confidence, Mr. Chance, making a great merit of their removal, since they were most pleasantly situated at Cagliari; but as his orders were positive to avoid all intercourse with the brothers

Murray

Murray and Harland, they had resolved to proceed to Smyrna, where they hoped to find letters from him, approving of their plans, giving him a direction to their friend the Jew, with whom they set sail in a Turkish xebec within the month after the friends had left Sardinia; and they both agreed that he had not exaggerated in his account of either the beauties or conveniencies of this delightful sea-port; but scarcely had they congratulated themselves upon the exchange they had made, when an epidemic disorder broke out among the Jews, which, though not absolutely the plague, was equally destructive, and this wretched couple did not escape the contagion. They lived long enough to remember the fate to which they had devoted dame Gwynne, and then died, like her, within a few days of each other, unknown and unlamented, and were by their Jewish friend, now a convalescent, hurried to an obscure grave, while he took possession of their effects, and thus reaped the

fruit

fruit he hoped from their removal, much sooner than he expected; and in answer to the letter addressed to the deceased by Mr. Chance, he returned proper certificates of their decease, and such trifling property as might prevent any further inquiry being made respecting the remainder.

Never had the earl breathed so freely as when this letter was put into his hands; he agreed with Chance, now become his factotum, that he supposed the Jew had embezzled no inconsiderable sum of money; but it would be useless to set any inquiries on foot—they were dead, therefore peace to their ashes, desiring their names and destiny might henceforth be consigned to oblivion.

The farmer Griffiths, who had been persuaded to emigrate to America, had removed into the interior, and would certainly never return; and David, who was really placed as bailiff to an estate in the north of Ireland, was so well off, he could

have

have no temptation to revisit England, though as the principals in the iniquitous plot were no more, these minor agents were very little to be dreaded; and had Mr. Chance been found dead in his bed, instead of appearing in his place at the desk appropriated to him, his lordship would have rejoiced most heartily; as it was, he affected the greatest regard for him; and certainly the quondam attorney rendered himself very useful, as he was ready to do, say, and swear, exactly what his lordship proposed; nor had the earl a better spy in his pay; and he was as much surprised as his patron at William Mansel never having reappeared at Westbury, declaring he was tempted to believe that he really had perished as they had wished it to be supposed, alleging the remarkable quiescence of Mr. Harland, who had, very probably, ascertained that he was no more.

The earl thought this very likely, since the merchant would neither have been sparing of trouble or expence to ascertain his

his fate. The soldier Griffiths had died in the West Indies. Thus did his lordship flatter himself that he had effectually secured his reputation, and as certainly provided against any attempt of William Mansel or his friends, to prove they were related.

Mr. Chance was surprised his lordship ever suffered such impossibilities to enter his mind. Such a mere clodhopper as Mansel must have turned out, admitting him to be a clever lad, would never find friends to assert his imaginary claims; he must be ignorant of his relationship to Mr. Harland. Mr. Arlington, who had affected to patronize him, was no more; his widow and daughters would now shrink from renewing their connexion with such a low-born plebeian; his lordship must have remarked, that though many people were too prone to notice the children of the lower classes, and to give them notions of luxury and comfort very incompatible with their rank in life, that they generally

generally threw them off as they grew up. The reverend Mr. Carter, who had been his first patron, was now married, and settled at his rectory, and had, he made no doubt, forgot that such a person as his once favourite pupil still existed, or he might have heard he was no more. At all events he was not his inmate, and they knew no youth answering his description had ever been domesticated with either colonel Murray or Mr. Harland; he therefore could not entertain a doubt of his being dead, or gone where he would never more be heard of.

The earl was half convinced by this reasoning, yet an unaccountable dread always came over him when his better judgment evinced its fallacy; but striving to shake off the foul fiend by which he was now continually haunted, he strove to render his abode again the scene of pleasure and elegance; and as the countess ever did the honours of her house with great propriety, and was never so much at home as when

arranging

arranging the decorations of a fete; the newspapers as usual bestowed the greatest encomiums upon her taste and hospitality, and her lord's elegant manners; who was well aware that his frequent cabinet and other dinner parties, and superb *at-homes* in the evening, were very essential to keeping up his popularity. Harmony had been restored between this fashionable couple, the earl declaring they must, by their increasing attention to the *beau monde*, make up for the deficiencies of lord Exmore, which might as yet be placed to the score of youth and inexperience; and as he frequently told those who had heard of his gross behaviour at Lausanne how severely he had punished him, they kindly prognosticated that a few months spent under his lordship's eye would render him all he could wish.

The winter had glided away more pleasantly than the preceding one, and the countess had mentioned a wish to visit Spa, now the continent was again open to

travellers.

travellers. The earl had not put a decided negative upon the proposal, though he guessed she hoped to extend her journey to Leyden; when one morning, having something to say to her respecting their evening party, he sought her in her boudoir immediately after breakfast, where he found her *tête-à-tête* with a maiden lady of rank and fashion, whose small income rendered her a second Mrs. Blandish to her richer friends, and she never visited those who could not pay for her smooth speeches and officious notice. The earl, who held poverty in full as much contempt as she did, and whose very superior mind laid him much less open to flattery than his countess, had long entertained an intuitive dislike to this titled spinster, whom he felt assured often misled his weak vain wife, and led her to form suspicions and conclusions which would never have occurred to her, had they not been suggested by her more artful companion. He so seldom entered lady Delmont's

mont's private apartments, that his present visit appeared both to surprise and disconcert both ladies: the visitor was instantly upon the move, declaring she had greatly exceeded her time; the countess protested she would set her down, requesting she would step into her dressing-room, where she would join her immediately. The earl ironically requested he might not derange them, but lady Bridget Shenstone retired while he was speaking, and as the countess awaited his communications standing, he gave them with his usual *sang froid*, and was retreating, if not as hastily as she had done, rather quicker than he usually left an apartment, when he caught sight of a letter lying on the ground, which probably would not have excited his notice, if lady Bridget had not seized some papers lying on a table, from which this appeared to have fallen in her precipitate retreat. Naturally inclined to suspicion, he picked up the letter; it was addressed to her ladyship, and he felt assured

sured the writing was lord Exmore's; a private mark under the name convinced him that it was intended for the countess; he felt no scruple in opening it; indeed he considered few private correspondences sacred where his own interest was concerned. Hastily unfolding it, as the handwriting corresponded with the direction, he soon discovered that a private correspondence was carried on between his obstinate insolent son and his even more weak and silly mother, evidently without the knowledge of the tutor, but of course perfectly confidential. This hopeful youth still dreaded the reappearance of his elder brother, whom he appeared to think there would be no sin in shooting, since he must be some impostor, whom his severe father would render subservient to his wish, to deprive him (whom he knew he detested) of his birthright; thanking his dear mother for her very kind supply, since he was half starved, and quite at the mercy of old Batson, who seldom or ever lost sight of him;

 but

but lady Bridget's agent having bribed the porter of the college, had enabled him to receive both letters and remittances quite safe; assuring his mother that when once of age, he would set his cruel father at defiance—nay, join the opposition, rather than fail to torment him; since he deserved no mercy at his hands, and none he should meet: his rank in life would enable him to marry a rich wife; and with plenty of money, he would soon shew the earl that he set his anger at nought: inquiring who had replaced the Mrs. Harland whom his father had once kept—ridiculing the idea of such a man setting up for a moral character; and really displaying more talents for satire and a more mschievous disposition than the earl had ever given him credit for.—"He is not such an egregious fool as his mother," mentally exclaimed the provoked minister, "but he is still more dangerous, and she has been kindly eager to lower me in his estimation: well might my advice, much more that of Batson, be

set

set at nought, when he was thus encouraged in his audacity and disobedience."

The letter was still open in his hand when the ladies returned into the boudoir in their way down stairs, really in search of the very missive he had so accidentally stumbled upon. Their confusion was still more visible than when he joined them; but rather recovering her presence of mind, lady Bridget exclaimed—" That letter is mine; I hope your lordship——"

" Has not read it, you mean to say, lady Bridget Shenstone; had it not been in my son's handwriting, I should have scorned to have taken advantage of your carelessness; as it is, I can only say that my doors will in future be closed against your ladyship, since you have thus dared to interfere with my orders and my arrangements; believe me, your sex is your sole protection from more rigorous measures.—You may thank yourself, lady Delmont, for my present behaviour; your carriage may convey her ladyship home; but if

 ever

ever you return this visit, I shall banish you from my roof, let the consequences be ever so inimical to my future welfare;" turning upon his heel, without waiting for a reply, and leaving his auditors in no frame of mind to deprecate his well-founded resentment: each gave way to a violent burst of sorrow, and then each blamed the other for what had occurred; till aware that a separation from her husband would expose her to general odium, the countess was the first to advise their submitting to necessity, requesting lady Bridget would suffer the carriage to take her home, and that she would write a true account of this unexpected *brulée* to her dear George, who must, like them, wait with patience till they could, unsuspected, renew their private correspondence; and as lady Bridget was equally averse to disputing the minister's will, she at last departed, promising to address lord Exmore that very evening.

As the earl had foreseen such would be the

the arrangement, an express to Mr. Batson occasioned the dismission of the porter, and enabled him to read the epistle of this female plotter, who had certainly not spared the earl in her animadversions; and had he not patched up a sort of political reconciliation with the countess, to deceive the world, and had it not been greatly to his interest to suffer her to continue his inmate, probably this letter would have sealed her doom; as it was, he never sought her in private—and thus this, to appearance, well-assorted couple, whose mansion was the continual scene of festivity, never met except in public, to deceive the world into a belief that they were as happy as rank, popularity, and riches could make them; and that while his lordship's mornings were devoted to the business of the nation, his evenings, when alone, were devoted to his lady and family.

CHAPTER XXII.

The brothers Murray and Harland, were during this period spending their time very agreeably at Naples. The English then resident there proved very pleasant people; and they had, through the means of the British ambassador, been introduced to many Neapolitans, from whose evening parties they derived much amusement.

Baron Villars was a frequent correspondent; from him they learnt the fracas at Lausanne, and its consequences to lord Exmore; he also sent them a copy of the earl's letter to Mr. De Melfort, which delighted them, justly conceiving his lordship never supposed he was thus apologizing to his proscribed son; indeed this was such a proof of his entertaining no suspicion that this young Swiss was other than

than the baron's son that, they ceased to fear his lordship having recourse to any future machinations against their *protégé;* still great caution was requisite—the earl was so keen a politician, he might be merely throwing dust in their eyes to put them off their guard; this the baron had suggested, who seriously dreaded the merchant's removing his nephew, for whom he felt his affection daily increase; since, though Edward continued his studies, he spent a good deal of his time with his nominal father, to whom he was no less attached. Indeed, brought up as he had been, his feelings had been so deadened, that he considered those who seemed to like him as superior beings. He was still very partial to his first friend, Mr. Carter; from motives of prudence, that gentleman had declined corresponding with him; but he sometimes heard of him through the medium of the baron's English correspondents, and was very

glad to learn he was well and happy, and that his first-born was named Edward.

Of Ellen Arlington, our hero, if so he may be styled, retained a most vivid recollection; the cruel letter of her father's dictation was amongst his hoards, as was Mrs. Arlington's short note, in which she explained by whose orders her Ellen had addressed him, assuring him that she freely forgave his having rather forgotten their relative situations, and recommending his not renewing his visits till she had made his peace with Mr. Arlington. As he had left Westbury the following day, he had certainly conformed to her wishes; still he felt most anxiously interested in the welfare of this sweet girl, whose kindness towards him as William Mansel was deeply engraven upon his heart, though he rather feared they should not meet again till she was married, when he should not feel inclined to renew their acquaintance, as the baron gave him no hopes of visiting

siting England at least before he was of age.

This worthy Swiss had told him so plausible a tale, to account for his having been so strangely brought up, placing the circumstance solely to the base cupidity of a relation of his mother, who had appropriated to herself the money she had received for his maintenance; and who had wished to prevent even his existence from being discovered, that she might, in concert with some other relatives, defraud him of his mother's fortune, which had been bequeathed to him on her deathbed; and various untoward circumstances, connected with the early imprudence of his parent, had enabled them to secure him so effectually in their toils, that it was merely by the deathbed confession of one of the parties he (the baron) had been able to discover his retreat; and even then, such were the people who had thus grossly abused their trust, that it became necessary for him to remove him by stealth,

 and

and to request that he would never, except to him or Mr. Carter, revert to his residence at Westbury, or to his having borne the name of Mansel.

Edward was at first too happy, except when Ellen Arlington came across him, to pay the same attention to this relation he did upon reflection. The baron must be his father—the sincere regard he evinced for him silenced all his doubts of their relationship. Of his mother this gentleman always spoke in the highest terms, though he did not deny she had acted imprudently, impelled by the severity of some part of her family and the treachery of others, which had prevented her from watching over his infancy, and thus preserving him from the machinations of those who had hoped to revel in her spoils, by bringing him up as a peasant, and by concealing his existence from those whom they were aware were most anxious to discover his retreat.

"The illegitimacy of my birth gave them

them greater power," Edward ventured to suppose.

"The less is said upon that subject, my dear boy, the better; possibly, would it tend to any good purpose, I might prove you were born in wedlock; but should I succeed, which owing to various circumstances, is very doubtful, I should lay you open to the malice of those who were so anxious to prevent your ever being in a situation to frustrate their iniquitous schemes; so content yourself with being restored to your proper rank in society, and in having two very sincere friends, besides myself, who are scarcely less anxious for your welfare, and to whose care and protection I shall leave you, should I die before you come of age. My early friend, Mr. Harland, you must have guessed, is one—and his brother-in-law, colonel Murray, is the other."

"I have no doubt of their being excellent men, my dear father; but I sincerely hope I shall never regard them but as your

your friends. Now do not fancy me curious, or anxious to know more than you have thought it necessary to relate to me respecting my early estrangement from my friends, but surely the lady whom I once supposed was my mother also bore the name of Harland; her visits to Broomfields are too deeply engraved on my re-recollection to lead me to suppose I am mistaken."

"You are perfectly correct: that woman was your late mother's most cruel enemy, and the agent of a person of still more consequence, at whose instigation you were secluded at farmer Griffiths's; she was a distant relation of my friend, who, fully aware of her iniquity, holds her in the greatest abhorrence; so endeavour henceforth to banish her and Broomfields from your recollection, since you are removed beyond the reach of her malice. Prudence and silence are still requisite respecting the past; so let us look forward to the future, with a proper dependence

upon

upon Him who protected you in your infancy, and who enabled me to rescue you from the hands of the wretches who proposed sending you to any foreign settlement most likely to prove your grave."

This closed the conversation; and if Edward entertained a wish that his beloved father had been more communicative, he did not give it words, convinced that prudence alone restrained him from entering into more details.

The baron wrote the friends all that had passed between him and his son, declaring that he became every day more attached to him, and had every reason to be proud of having adopted a youth who was so generally beloved and admired, as he was continually congratulated upon being the father of such a son, who was considered, and with justice, an universal genius. The uncle and father-in-law were no less delighted, since they had much rather see him shine as a private gentleman than even succeed his father as minister, though his

his talents certainly rendered him capable of doing so with éclat.

As the spring advanced, the colonel expressed a wish to visit the Greek islands, and those shores of the Mediterranean which he had never seen, and was never likely to do, except he seized the present opportunity. They were now assured that Edward was well, and pursuing his studies with his characteristic activity. The baron would freely forgive their deferring to visit Switzerland till the autumn, as the worthy man was half jealous of their avowed regard for his *son*, and appeared to dread the dear boy drawing comparisons between them; and he agreed that their proposed visit might unsettle him, and render him very anxious to revisit England, of which island he seemed to retain a most pleasing remembrance, notwithstanding his early privations; but Ellen Arlington appeared still uppermost in his mind, not to mention his first patron, Mr. Carter, who had very lately, in conse-

consequence of the colonel having had an excellent living fallen in, which was in his gift, removed into Hampshire.

Mr. Harland was too partial to the colonel's society to raise many objections to his scheme; the baron was therefore informed of their plans, and the friends set sail for Sicily. We shall not follow them on their voyage, &c. merely observing that they learnt the death of Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths from a Smyrna merchant, whose brother Mr. Harland had known in Russia, and like the earl they were more inclined to rejoice at the circumstance than to regret their demise. Martin felt assured they had recollected poor Gwynne in their last moments, presuming that the gentlemen having visited Cagliari had led to their untimely fate. As they were seldom stationary, they did not often hear from either England or Switzerland; and various delays, and other unforeseen circumstances, so prolonged their voyage, that it was too late in the season, when they landed at Leghorn,

Leghorn, to render it safe for the colonel to proceed into Switzerland; they therefore resolved to winter at Pisa, and to proceed to Berne Berg, as early as the weather permitted, in the spring.

No incident worthy recording occurred during their stay at the last-mentioned town. Mrs. Arlington, Mr. Du Verney wrote them, had again taken up her abode in Saville-row, the colonel having requested her to consider that house as her own, while he continued abroad.

The baron and Edward continued in excellent health; the former appearing to become daily more attached to his boy, as he generally termed our hero.

Lord Delmont continued in the same high favour with one party, and was as much disliked by the other; while the countess's fetes continued as brilliant as ever; and certainly she was indebted to her near connexion with the cabinet, and profuse style of living, for being so often mentioned in the public papers. The earl's

earl's eldest son, these journals also informed the public, was studying very hard at Leyden, and was likely to display equal talents with his father, when he took his seat in parliament. The opposition papers were rude enough to remind their readers why he had left Switzerland; but who of any sense or consequence ever attended to the nonsense they printed? thought the countess and her friends; while the earl was fully convinced that coercion and the greatest severity alone kept his worthless son from again affording paragraphs for those journals which condemned his measures, and of course a triumph to the party whom he vainly endeavoured to annihilate.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE now sworn friends and brothers had reached Turin, in their road to Switzerland, where they proposed spending the summer, wishing to see every thing worthy notice. They remained three weeks in this capital city, when every thing being prepared for their departure, and the carriages at the door of their hotel, Mr. Harland, who was examining the splinter-bar, which appeared to him to have sustained some injury, received so dreadful a kick from a vicious horse, that his leg was broken in so shocking a manner, it was at first feared that he must have submitted to amputation, to which he appeared so very averse, that the attending surgeons exerted their skill so successfully, he was, at the expiration of a fortnight, pronounced out of

of danger. Martin proved an invaluable nurse, and the colonel seldom left his friend's bedside when he was well enough to converse.

As the cure promised to be very tedious, the bone had been so splintered, baron Villars joined them at Turin, declaring he would have brought his *son* with him, had not colonel Murray in his letter rather objected to his doing so—since Mr. Harland must have been either much better, as proved the case, or no more, ere he (the baron) could reach Turin—and to confine a youth of that age to a sick room, merely to gratify his own feelings, was not the wish of the invalid, not to mention the derangement of his studies. Edward was therefore left with Mr. Chaumette, while his father visited Italy, where he remained till the season obliged him to return home; since easy as the passage of the Alps had been rendered, he did not wish to cross them in winter; and as Mr. Harland's medical attendants recommended

mended his wintering at Nice, thither he proceeded, the colonel and Martin (who was now considered and treated as their joint friend) accompanying him; as he often declared that he was much more indebted for his recovery to their unremitting attentions than to his surgeons' skill, though he gave them great credit for their treatment of his leg, as the trifling lameness they had not been able to prevent he considered of no consequence.

Earl Delmont had, it may be supposed, heard of his misfortune; and it may also be supposed that he would not have been a very severe mourner had it pleased God to have taken him; since, without knowing why, he felt a secret dread of the merchant, that all his self-reasoning could not entirely overcome. Of his eldest son's death he no longer entertained a doubt; yet it was most extraordinary and truly provoking, that, notwithstanding all the diligence of Mr. Chance and various underlings, it had never been satisfactorily ascertained

certained how he left Westbury, or whither in the first instance he had bent his steps. Mrs. Harland's duplicity had occasioned so much time having elapsed before his departure was known, that the usual methods of inquiry had all failed, since no stage coachman could remember who they had taken up six months before; the same difficulty had occurred respecting the vessels which had cleared out from Bristol; and thus, though the minister would have offered any bribe to be at a certainty, to him his son's fate remained shrouded in an impenetrable mystery.

To return to the brothers. As early as the weather at all seconded their wishes, they left Nice for Switzerland, and without any accident to detain them on the road, reached the castle of Berne Berg, a fine old edifice, bearing some resemblance to an old-fashioned English country mansion, in perfect health and safety. As they had not chosen to fix the day of their rival,

arrival, the baron had not let Edward know exactly when he expected them, resolving to send him an express the moment they came; but as he had much to talk over with them, he wished to have them for the first day to himself.

Their reception was, it may be supposed, truly cordial; though more than twenty years their senior, the baron considered them as brothers, and they were grieved to observe that he appeared to have broken very fast during the last six months. He was aware of the circumstance, as he almost immediately related to the gentlemen how he had disposed of his estates and acquired property. The small seat, which had given a name to the child of his adoption, he had truly declared to his relations, had been purchased for him with part of his mother's property; and was he not likely to be so very amply provided for, he should have been much more bountiful to him; but he did not wish to make his Swiss relatives the dear

boy's

boy's enemies, entering into various details, which would be very uninteresting to our readers.

The express had been dispatched the moment the gentlemen arrived, which was on the Thursday, to dinner; and as they knew it would not reach Geneva till next morning, probably before any one was stirring, they did not expect Edward before the next evening; but to their great surprise, he entered the breakfast-parlour ere they had finished their meal, having set out the moment he had read the baron's letter, and performed the distance, between fifty and sixty miles, in six hours, upon his famous horse.

The baron received his first embrace, and never had the old gentleman felt more proud than when he asked Mr. Harland if he should have recollected his son; and certainly, but for his great resemblance to both his parents, the merchant might with truth have replied in the negative, since Edward, to the finest figure and most engaging

gaging countenance, now joined the manners and deportment of an elegant young man of fashion, equally removed from the English dandy, and the rusticity he had displayed when he had last seen him. Never had the colonel been so taken by surprise, as the youth's smile so particularly reminded him of his adored Emily, that he with difficulty sufficiently commanded his feelings not to excite the young man's surprise.

The first compliments and welcomes being over, the baron inquired for Mr. Mirvan.

"He is in excellent health; I only wish he had a little more quicksilver in his disposition; he is too grave and steady for his age; he will not be half so active as you are, sir, when as old; but he is a most amiable youth; were we more alike, I do not think we should be half so intimate."

The colonel thought that very possible; while Mr. Harland, who felt, like the baron, proud of his connexion with this highly-

highly-gifted youth, was secretly wishing he could see him in parliament, opposing his powerful father's measures, feeling assured that he had talents equal to the undertaking, resolving, when the baron died (as to remove him before would be the height of ingratitude), not to suffer him to bury them in Switzerland. His present studies were now discussed, and the friends were astonished at the depth of learning he displayed, and at the fluency with which he had acquired all the modern languages. He spoke in the highest terms of Mr. Chaumette, and of the various professors attached to the college, declared himself delighted with the society of Geneva, mentioning various families of the first consequence, with whom he seemed to be upon the most intimate footing.

"And who are your favourites among the ladies?" gaily inquired Mr. Harland.

"I could mention twenty equally amiable young women, sir, therefore I should be puzzled to decide," adroitly turning

the conversation upon the merchant's late accident, well knowing that the baron wished him to select a Swiss wife; but as yet he had seen no female to compare to his former playfellow.

The colonel again reverted to Mr. Mirvan, inquiring whether he was studying for any particular profession.

"He does not know for what he is intended, sir. His grandfather proposes visiting Switzerland this summer; and my friend supposes that he means his mother and himself should return to England with him, as the old gentleman wishes him to spend a couple of years at Oxford. Mirvan would prefer going the grand tour; but that must be as the higher powers choose."

"I should suppose he is intended for the church, though I am surprised at the doctor's having given him a foreign education," was the reply.

"He is not to be a clergyman, I am convinced, sir, though his own inclinations point

point that way; but his grandfather, upon his telling him so, said he had other views for him. To rise in the church, people ought to have very powerful interest; he (the doctor) had been led to look forward to a mitre, but a great man, now in power in England, upon whom he persuaded himself he might depend, had overlooked him in favour of another candidate, who had more parliamentary interest; however, time would shew whether he might not be able to convince this gentleman, that it might have been more to his interest to have preferred his certainly well-founded claims, not that he harboured any revenge—at least so he told his grandson. But I own I think he almost confessed he was influenced by that base passion."

"But pray, my wise son," rejoined the baron, "do you make no allowance for this worthy man's disappointment? ingratitude is surely as baneful as revenge, so I will not have the doctor condemned, even by-

by you, who are very seldom in the wrong. But I am sorry to hear your friend does not approve of his grandfather's intentions."

"Oh, he does not, like me, my dear father, suffer his tongue to outrun his discretion; but if, as it seems probable, he is merely to figure as an English country gentleman, he thinks he should glean more knowledge by travelling, than by studying *alma mater*. Such are his ideas. But then, grandpapa, and I dare say he knows best, notwithstanding my flippancy, says, he may form many valuable connexions at college; besides, he wishes him particularly to study the British constitution, possibly with a view to his obtaining a seat in parliament, which may lead to greater honours. Such has been the reasoning of the old gentleman when I have been present, and I have been surprised by the sound arguments with which he has silenced both me and his grandson; he is certainly a most excellent scholar, and

and he appears to have made a study of politics; yet he is deficient in that open candour that pervades all your words and actions, my dear father. He may, and doubtless is, a man of very superior talents; but he seems by choice to pursue a sort of crooked path. I dare say I am merely exposing my own ignorance; but though I give him credit for excellent intentions, I feel assured that he wishes to render his grandson more a man of the world than suits with my friend's principles; however, I have no right to arraign his conduct."

"Why, as we are unacquainted with his reasons for wishing to render your friend a man of the world, we have no right to condemn his motives," rejoined the baron, who was delighted at having thus drawn out his favourite. "Have you heard how lord Exmore goes on, to whose want of policy you were indebted for so elegant a letter from his father?"

"He is returned to England, I have heard from professor Champfort, who cor-

responded with his tutor, and is, ere this, at Cambridge. Mr. Batson writes, that he will make a better figure in a ball-room than in St. Stephen's Chapel; and yet as soon as he is of age, there he is to hold forth. Should the earl offend him, ten to one he displays his oratory on the other side, as he perfectly well understands the meaning of the word revenge; and while at Geneva, he used to entertain his favourites, or rather his flatterers, with railing at his father, who, by his account, kept various mistresses, and treated lady Delmont and his children very ill—nay, had threatened to acknowledge a natural son for his heir. Mirvan, a few others, and myself, laughed at his absurdity; I even once told him, and incurred his future hatred for my officiousness, that he would hardly be tolerated in decent society, if his father was not prime minister."

"Then the earl's letter has rendered you his stanch friend?" said Mr. Harland.

"Surely, my dear sir, you have drawn

a very

a very erroneous conclusion. I know I shall expose my ignorance, but positively I think that very polite epistle was merely written for effect; not a word sprung from the heart. My lord knew his son had so grossly violated the common rules of politeness, that it was impossible to defend him, so he gave him up; and as a *pis aller*, addressed a fine, florid string of well-turned phrases to me, which, had I been his son, might have turned my brain. I did not find them so intoxicating; I saw the ill concealed leaven; since complaisant as he affected to be, I feel assured that even when he wrote, he was more angry with me than with his son. He may be a most excellent politician—nay, I am sure he is a very superior character; but, laugh if you please, to me he seems to be able to 'smile and smile, and be a villain.'"

"Too bad!" exclaimed the delighted baron, while the brothers declared they perfectly agreed with their young friend, who hastened away to look after his horse,

 declaring

declaring Bastide, a Swiss servant, was a very poor groom, asking the gentlemen to come and look at Rory Bean, as he named his favourite.

"Oh that the earl could have heard this darling boy thus display him in his proper colours!" cried Mr. Harland.

"His mother's spirit seemed to animate him," observed the colonel. "How truly may we now exclaim, *what shall be, shall be,* since I am sure the earl would give any bribe within his compass, to have such a son succeed him! How is he punished in the fruition of his villany! since to have heard that youth second his plans in the House of Commons, would have rendered him too proud;" both gentlemen declaring they could never sufficiently thank the baron for having so fully seconded their wishes.

"Nature, and proper tuition, has made him what you find him," was the reply; "can you wonder at my partiality? but let us go and see his horse."

He

He was rubbing him down, telling the gentlemen he had not yet forgot his early lessons, and he was now teaching Bastide how to manage an English horse. Rory Bean seemed aware of the favour shewn him, and, in his way, appeared very grateful. The friends declared him to be a very fine creature, and thus gratified their favourite, who soon rejoined them in the saloon.

CHAPTER XXIV.

During the morning, our hero did the honours of the castle to his father's friends, leading them over the gardens, which though laid out in the Dutch style, were pleasant and suitable to the mansion. As Mr. Harland's lameness prevented him from taking long walks, he returned to the baron, while the colonel and Edward took

another turn upon a noble terrace, which commanded a very fine view; the latter pointed out the small domain from which he derived his present name, adding—"The house is more modern, and the grounds are now laid out more *à l'Anglois;* Mirvan and I have endeavoured to give the castle of Melfort an appearance of comfort, in which Berne Berg is rather deficient."

"Do you still botanize?" asked the colonel.

"It is one of my favourite pursuits; and the Swiss mountains afford such a variety of beautiful plants, I delight in a ramble; you shall see my collection, colonel."

"I shall feel obliged; though I suppose you cannot boast of any *Indian shrubs,* like the one you procured at Badminton."

"Good heavens! how came you to be aware of that circumstance, my dear sir? of course you also heard what serious offence I gave the great Mr. Arlington ere I left Gloucestershire."

"I did

"I did hear the old gentleman had acted very absurdly."

"I was too young at the time to be aware of the liberty I was taking with a lovely girl, who had suffered me to consider her as my equal; Mr. Arlington was not inclined to overlook my ignorance, which had certainly led me into error, as he boxed my ears, cuffed the sweet Ellen, and even struck her attendant—and not content with having thus asserted his superiority, he obliged the sweet girl to write me a letter, certainly not calculated either to flatter my vanity or compose my mind; had not the excellent Mrs. Arlington sent me a few lines at the same time, I should have been most miserable; but the moment I learnt who had dictated the letter which had so hurt my feelings, I merely prized it as being the writing of my sweet favourite, though very possibly she has, ere this, forgotten the *ploughboy that whistled o'er the lea.*"

"I cannot take upon me to say whether

ther she now remembers you, as I have not seen her these two years; but as she appeared to set great store by her Indian shrub, when I saw her, I did not suppose she had then forgotten the donor."

"She was a lovely girl when we parted. Her father is dead, the baron has told me; well, should we never meet again, she has my best wishes for her future happiness."

"Why you seem to think more humbly of yourself now than when you left Gloucestershire."

"I know myself rather better, colonel; my excellent friend, Mr. Carter, by drawing out the few talents nature had bestowed upon me, first rendered me rather vain; compared with those I daily associated with, I fancied myself a prodigy; the gay, lovely Ellen Arlington gave the next stimulus to my good opinion of myself—she kindly noticed me, and my trifling offerings were so much overrated by her and her dear mother, whom I really almost worshipped, that I forgot the difference in

our

our stations; and had not Miss Arlington taken every means to check my pride, I should probably sooner have incurred Mr. Arlington's displeasure. My dear father's arrival at Westbury, where you know he took up his abode under the name of Rivers, did not tend to lessen my vanity, which broke forth so egregiously upon the eve of my departure, that I laid myself open to the treatment I received. I can now make many excuses for a father in such a situation; to him I was still an uninformed peasant, though I had been taught to believe I should henceforth rank among gentlemen; but he was not acquainted with my future prospects, therefore he acted very naturally; perhaps, had he been a man of higher rank, or had his notions been more liberal, he would have treated me with silent contempt, instead of giving way to a degree of rage very unbecoming his station in life, since could he suppose two children would be swear-

ing

ing eternal love? at all events, how impolitic to give publicity to such a mere act of folly!"

"He was a strange character; and at the time you mention, he was very much swayed by his eldest daughter. Before he died, he did ample justice to the superior merits of your favourite Ellen, who was not, when I last saw her, quite so ambitious as her father."

"Probably she may not, sir; but I cannot flatter myself, while so many Englishmen of birth and fortune will be endeavouring to obtain her hand, that she would give the preference to the illegitimate son of a foreigner. No; believe me, I have much less silly vanity now than when I first was noticed by Mrs. Arlington, of whom I could relate such traits of goodness, and such kind attentions, even to my comforts, that while I live I shall daily put up prayers for her welfare."

"Which is so intimately connected with

that

that of her younger daughter, that you must join her in your petitions."

Edward was pleased with the idea; and as it grew late, they returned to the house. The colonel seized the first opportunity to repeat the conversation he had had with his favourite to Mr. Harland. As the baron so much wished him to settle in Switzerland, he did not encourage his seeking a wife in England; and as the merchant did not wish him to marry very early, the friends agreed they must leave the future to Providence. Should the fair Ellen still remember the *farmer's boy*, she might wish to see him again before she married; but as it was very probable she would have many excellent offers as soon as she made her appearance in the great world, it would be very wrong to flatter their *protégé* to form hopes which might never be realized.

Edward having now learnt all that could be acquired at the Genevian college—indeed Nature had implanted such a love of

of study in his breast, and given him such a quickness of comprehension, that he easily became master of every science to which he applied himself — the baron resolved he should not return to Mr. Chaumette's; and he had gone through all his other exercises, such as riding, fencing, and dancing, with a degree of spirit that rendered him the favourite pupil of the best masters of those necessary sciences; he only required to see a little more of the world to render him a much superior character to his still admired father, who had, by his wish to aggrandize his children by his present wife, deprived himself of the honour he would have derived from such a son.

Lord Exmore had, as we have related, returned to England the preceding autumn; and as he had reaped some experience from his past follies, self-interest rendered him much more amenable to control than heretofore. He was now aware that the earl could bring him forward

ward with great eclat; since, though he did not possess either his lordship's talents or understanding, his natural parts were not despicable; and as he wished to come into parliament, and to enjoy some snug sinecure, he had sense enough to pay a degree of court to his father, which, considering his juvenile obstinacy and early perverseness, was very pleasing to the earl, who sent him to college, as became the heir to his honours and estate, retaining Mr. Batson as his Mentor, though he had bestowed an excellent living upon that gentleman, as to him he thought himself indebted for the very favourable change which had taken place in his son's disposition.

The countess, who doated upon her dear George, now ministered to all his follies, still leading him to suppose the earl was very capable of disinheriting him for the unknown son he kept in reserve—thus inducing this youth to add hypocrisy to his other failings, and to feign a regard for

for that father whom in his soul he detested, and merely looked up to as the distributor of the loaves and fishes which he was so eager to share.

The ladies Mirvan were to come out the ensuing winter, and would of course, said their mother, marry men of equal rank with their father; and as they certainly bore more resemblance to their half-brother in point of disposition, the earl felt much interested in their future destiny, while the countess conceived she should have ensured their happiness if she procured them titled husbands.

The younger son was at this period in the last stage of a decline at Lisbon, where he had been ordered when his medical attendants found his case hopeless, and as he had a tutor and a proper suite with him, his father fancied he had done all that the case required; and his mother had been so wearied out by the increasing peevishness incident to his complaint, that she was satisfied, she told her friends, that every

every attention necessary to the dear child's comfort was paid him by those about him; indeed, had she been so inclined, the earl would not have suffered her to visit Portugal, and never had she felt so convinced of his superior wisdom.

The minister now hoped lord Exmore would do him the greatest credit; his early errors might safely be placed to his age and inexperience, and if necessary, the countess's absurd indulgence might be pleaded in excuse. He was well aware that he had made himself many friends in Switzerland by his letter to the young Swiss De Melfort, who after all appeared to be a mere left-handed son of the baron, who had probably formed some imprudent connexion in Russia, where he understood he had spent many years, with some Englishwoman of inferior rank, by whom he had this boy, who could only inherit his personal property; still he felt that he had acted right in apologizing for lord Exmore's gross behaviour, since to a youth

so

so situated, and to his father, his letter must have been truly flattering. As to Mr. Harland and colonel Murray being intimate with this baron, that would rather render him more popular, since the first was, he hoped, his *dupe*—he dared not style him his friend—and the innate sense of honour of the other would prevent his reverting to the past; therefore, had he but felt assured that his eldest son was either no more, or removed far beyond the reach of his uncle Harland, he would have felt *comparatively* happy—*positively* he had never done since the age of childhood; and the woman, to obtain whose hand he had sacrificed so much, was so vain, arrogant, and selfish, that he now as cordially hated her, as he had heretofore fancied he loved and admired her rank, fortune, and connexions.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XXV.

As our hero continued to correspond with his friend Mirvan, he was informed of doctor Welford's arrival in Switzerland, who proposed spending the ensuing three months at Vevay, and then returning to England with his mother and himself, as the old gentleman continued bent upon his spending at least two years at Oxford, which he the more lamented, as he should thus be separated from the friend of his youth much sooner than he could have wished; still, as distance was said to increase the bonds of friendship, though it often proved inimical to those of love, he hoped his dear Edward would continue to correspond with him, since their residing in different kingdoms might give a zest to their journals.

As

As our hero read this letter to the baron and his friends, and they, that is the merchant and the colonel, expressed a wish to be introduced to this reverend gentleman, their host wrote, through the medium of our hero, to the doctor, Mrs. Mirvan, and her son, requesting they would favour him with their company at Berne Berg for a month or six weeks previous to their leaving Switzerland, mentioning, as an inducement to the former, that colonel Murray and Mr. Harland were now his guests, and would greatly assist him in rendering his old castle an agreeable residence, regretting that there were no ladies to associate with Mrs. Mirvan.

A very polite answer was returned by Mr. Mirvan, in his grandfather's and his own name, promising to avail themselves of the baron's politeness in the course of a fortnight. Mrs. Mirvan had unfortunately another engagement, that would prevent her being of the party, as she had not been

been expected, and merely out of politeness included in the invitation.

The gentlemen were not disappointed, and on the day specified, doctor Welford and his grandson made their appearance; and as ceremony had long been banished from the hospitable abode, the divine soon found himself as much at home as his grandson had ever done; and as he particularly excelled in conversation, he proved a most agreeable addition to the party.

The brothers quite agreed with Edward respecting his very superior talents, and, like him, they had often thought his reasoning more specious than solid. He seldom asked a direct question, though he did not appear to be deficient in curiosity. His duty towards the parishioners of two excellent livings, he told the gentlemen, prevented his making so long a stay abroad as he could have wished, carelessly observing, that he had been the grand tour in his younger days, having travelled with the

the son of a nobleman, who had, he flattered himself, derived some benefit from his instructions, but mentioned no names. He had been flattered into a belief that his endeavours to develop this young noble's talents, having amply succeeded, would lead to his greater advancement in the church than a prebendal stall; but he had been overlooked in favour of the younger sons of nobility; therefore, had he twenty grandsons, they should select some other profession; and as it was, he had very different views for Mirvan; frequently launching out in praises of our hero, whom, he told the colonel one day, strongly reminded him of a gentleman with whom he had formerly been upon intimate terms, slightly remarking he bore no resemblance to his father. "He is the image of his mother, I have been told," was the reply; and the subject dropped, though the colonel did not exactly approve of these sifting remarks, naturally supposing that the sort of mystery which still

still hung over our hero's childhood had rendered the doctor more curious than he would openly acknowledge respecting his real claims upon the baron, whose fondness for him was certainly parental.

Welford Mirvan, as our hero's friend was named, had seldom spent his time more agreeably: he rode and walked with Edward in the morning; and in the evening the gentlemen endeavoured to render their conversation amusing and instructive to these attached youths. No one could descant more ably upon the British constitution than the doctor; nor was he less competent to discuss the merits of the Reformation. The worthy baron often related various traits of Swiss valour; William Tell was frequently his theme; and the colonel gave the young men very animating descriptions of India, while Mr. Harland transported them with equal success into the north of Europe.

Thus did they spend their time, each regretting the approaching breaking up of the

the party, when Mr. Harland received letters from St. Petersburgh, which rendered it necessary that he should return thither with all convenient speed, as the gentleman who had succeeded him in business, with every prospect of being equally fortunate, had been so anxious to enlarge the concern, that he had entered into speculations which might prove ruinous to himself, and prevent his fulfilling his engagements with his predecessor, who might thus, except he immediately repaired to Russia, be eventually a considerable loser; and though he could have spared the money, he resolved not to be duped by a man in whom he had placed more confidence than he deserved. As he was by nature frank and open in all his dealings, he immediately mentioned the unpleasant predicament in which he stood to the party assembled, adding—"I should wish to reach Russia early in the autumn, as I hope, with proper diligence, I may be able to return to England in the spring."

"Were

"Were it not for the severity of the climate," said the colonel, "you should not go alone."

"I would not suffer you to accompany me, were you ever so anxious to visit the North; you shall suffer Mr. Martin to represent you; he will prove a most excellent companion, and a very able auxiliary."

Had he not feared to hurt the worthy baron's feelings, he would have preferred the company of his nephew; but to take him to such a distance would, he knew, prove so severe a trial to this good old man, he could not give utterance to such a wish; and the baron dreading losing sight of the child of his adoption, warmly applauded his plan, hoping the colonel would spend the time of his absence under his roof. The colonel would have done so with pleasure, if he was not so fully aware that his presence was required in England; he should therefore, if agreeable to doctor

Welford,

Welford, return with him and his party to Great Britain.

The divine eagerly caught at the proposal, offering to make his movements wholly dependent upon the colonel's convenience; and thus matters were in a manner settled, Edward sincerely regretting the premature dispersion of so pleasant a party; he so sincerely returned the baron's regard, that no motive of amusement or improvement would have induced him to leave him in his present precarious state of health. Should he recover, he had agreed to spend the next summer in England, and he felt he should doubly enjoy returning thither in his company. Meanwhile the party were to correspond; and though he hardly knew why, as the colonel was intimate with Mrs. Arlington, he hoped, through his means, to hear of her youngest daughter, for whom he had composed a beautiful herbal, which he resolved to give the colonel, who might offer it

as

as his own present, since it was still deemed prudent never to revert to his having borne the name of Mansel.

END OF VOL. III.

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